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INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

APRIL, 2005

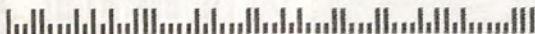
VOLUME 27, NUMBER 4

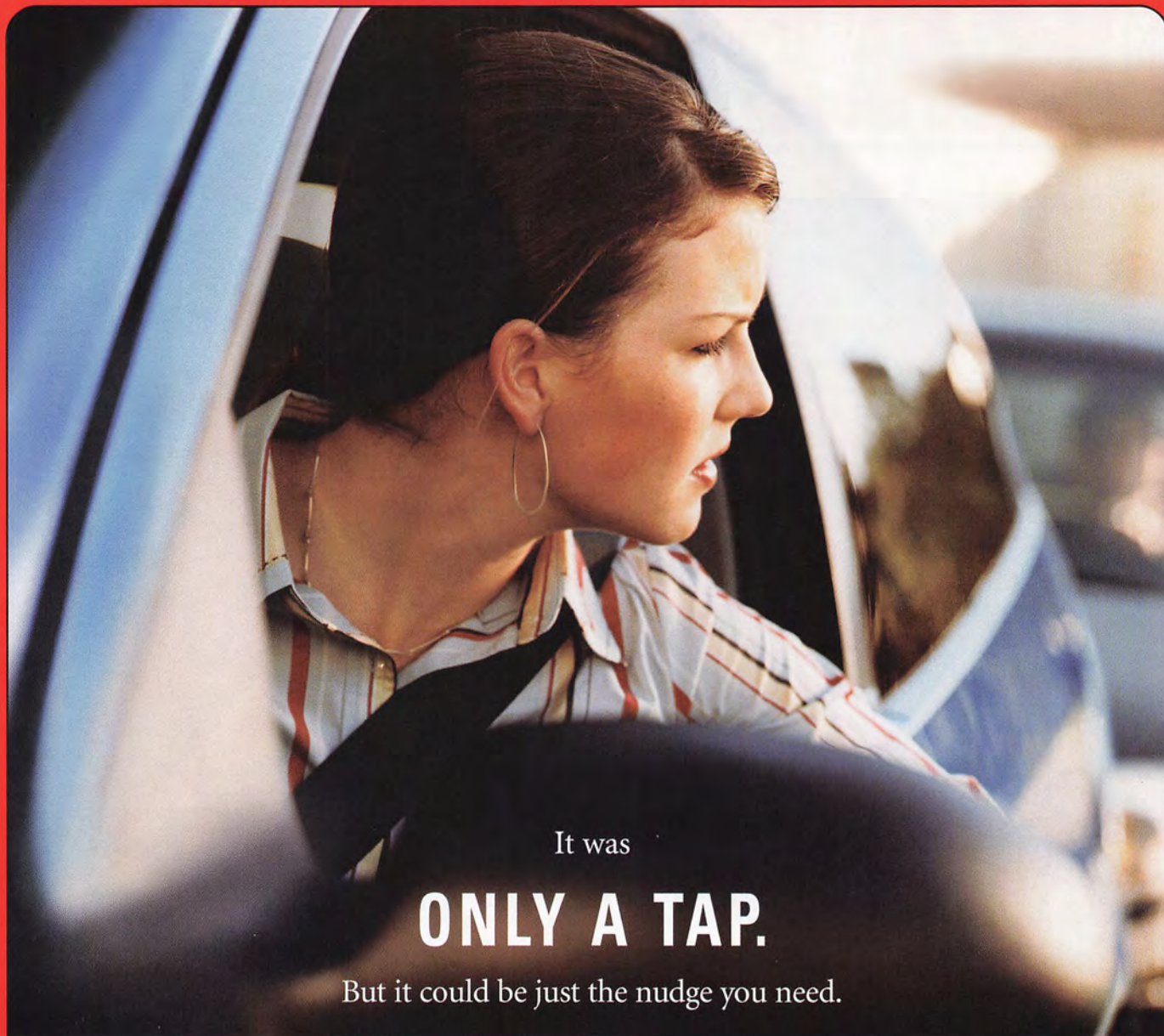
Inside:
Freddie Roach

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- Spring Football
- Baseball
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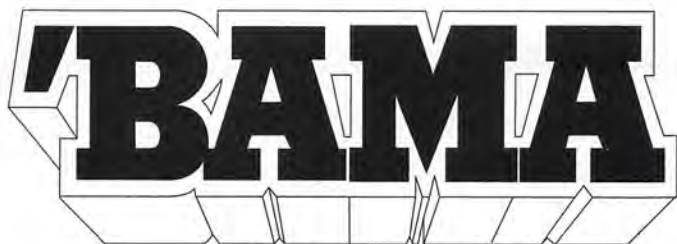
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INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

Contents

On The Cover: Freddie Roach has been a starting linebacker for most of the past three years, and he has had great success. After a year at weakside linebacker, he'll be back in the middle for his senior season. See Page 10. Kent Gidley Photo



Page 7



Page 12



Page 23



Page 24

Replacing Rick Moody: Women's Basketball Search On

5

After 16 years as head coach of Alabama's women's basketball team, Rick Moody retired. The Crimson Tide is looking for his replacement. Temple's Dawn Staley is top target for many schools.

by Kirk McNair

Spring Football: Some Questions Remain Until Fall

7

Following a disappointing 2004 season, owing to injuries in great part, Alabama went into spring practice with questions. Many of them were answered, but some remain.

by Mitch Dobbs

Freddie Roach: Hard Work Is Secret To Success

10

After an excellent freshman year and decent sophomore season, Freddie Roach got off to a bad start last season. He ended up as the starter at weakside linebacker and had a good year. In 2005 he moves back to the middle linebacker spot he played as a freshman and sophomore.

by Kirk McNair

Antoine Caldwell: Maybe It Wasn't Such A Bad Break

12

Antoine Caldwell expected to be a part of the playing rotation in the offensive line as a true freshman last year, but a broken foot put him on the sidelines. He was outstanding in the spring at left guard.

by Greg Wallace

Morrow Thomley: New Year Bringing New Hope

16

Morrow Thomley came to Alabama as a pitcher-outfielder, but a broken hand ruined his 2004 season. The senior is now playing right field and is off to an excellent start.

by Peter Edmund

Academics Pressure: Scholarships Are On The Line

20

The NCAA surprised a lot of schools, including Alabama, with the equivalent of "mid-term grades" on new academic guidelines. Bama football has work to do to avoid losing scholarships.

by Mitch Dobbs

Basketball Recruiting: Will Alabama Add Another Signee?

23

Coach Mark Gottfried's Alabama recruiting class from November is ranked in the nation's top ten, but that depends on the arrival of Richard Hendrix. Bama may add another signee.

by Andrew Bone

Where Are They Now? Junior Continues To Be A Winner

24

E.J. Junior was part of one of the finest eras in Alabama football history, teams that went 44-4 and won two national championships. After a bit of a rough time, he built his life back. And now he is back in football as a coach in Europe.

by Erik Stinnett

Basketball Wrap-Up: Despite Finish, It Was A Good Year

30

Most will remember the quick exit from the NCAA Tournament at the hands of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, but all-in-all it was a successful season for Coach Mark Gottfried's Crimson Tide basketball team. Now Bama must look ahead without Kennedy Winston.

by Kirk McNair

The Departments

2005 Alabama Football Schedule	7
Post-Spring Depth Chart	9
Scorecard	26
Winter Sports Results	28
Spring Sports Schedules	29



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Publishing Information

'BAMA, INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE (USPS 489-470; ISSN 0195-0975) is published monthly for ten months from August to May by College Sports Publications, Inc., 2116 8th Street, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401. Editorial office is located at 2116 8th Street, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401-2134.

POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 'BAMA, INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE, P.O. Box 866104, Tuscaloosa, AL 35486-0054.

Periodicals postage paid at Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and at additional mailing office. Subscription rate is \$35.00 per year. Foreign subscriptions \$10.00 per additional. Change of address: Six weeks advance notice, and old address as well as new required. Address all correspondence to: Post Office Box 866104, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35486-0054. Not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts or photographs unless accompanied by return postage. Copyright © 2005 College Sports Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

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Women's Basketball Search Is On

by Kirk McNair

Temple's Staley top target of many schools

There is no chance that Alabama would be able to hire Tennessee's Pat Summitt, the winningest women's coach in college basketball, as Bama's women's basketball coach. And there is no chance that Alabama would be willing to hire *Playboy* magazine's Miss June, in hopes of increasing attendance without regard to success.

A couple of other names that can be scratched off the list:

T.R. Dunn, the former Alabama men's player, is now an assistant coach with the Sacramento Kings of the NBA. He formerly served as head coach of the WNBA Charlotte Sting. He left that job to join Coach Mark Gottfried's Alabama's men's staff as an assistant coach before returning to the NBA following the 2002 season.

Wendell Hudson, another former Alabama men's star and assistant coach, is now associate athletics director with the Crimson Tide. And among his duties is—along with Senior Women's Administrator Marie Robbins—finding a new women's head coach for Alabama. Although Hudson can find a successful former women's coach just by looking in the mirror. He was women's head coach at McLennan Community College in Waco, Texas, where he served as athletics director for six years before returning to Bama in 2003.

So where will Alabama find a replacement for Rick Moody, who retired at the end of this year following 16 years as head coach of the Crimson Tide women's team?

Moody announced his retirement on February 22 with two regular season games remaining. His squad played very well in losing efforts at Vanderbilt and against powerful Tennessee. After defeating Florida in the first round of the Southeastern Conference Tournament, Moody's Crimson Tide played then-number one-ranked LSU off its feet, seemingly headed for overtime, when curious SEC officiating ended Alabama's season and Moody's career on a bit of a sour note, a controversial post-game determination on a three-point shot deciding the outcome.

In his 16 years at Bama, Moody amassed 311 victories, more than any other coach in basketball—men's or women's—at The Capstone.

In making the announcement, he said, "It has been my privilege and the honor of a lifetime to serve as the head coach of the women's basketball program at Alabama for the past 16 years. I look back over these years with great pride and satisfaction for the growth and success of this program. It has been a truly gratifying experience to guide and mentor all of the young women who chose to play for this great university.

"I am leaving with great memories and warmest regards for all my colleagues in the Athletics Department. I have always appreciated the support and friendship extended to me and my family by the administration, faculty, staff and amazing fans of the University of Alabama. As I enter retirement, I look forward to continuing to follow and support the efforts of the fine Crimson Tide athletic programs."

During his tenure, Moody took Alabama to 11 postseason appearances including eight NCAA Tournament bids. He guided his charges to the school's only Final Four trip in 1994 and also led Bama to five consecutive "Sweet 16" finishes.

Moody led the Crimson Tide to 20 or more victories in eight seasons including a school record 26 victories in 1993-94. He guided Bama to a final Top 25 ranking eight times and posted 44 wins over nationally ranked opponents including nine versus Top 10 squads.

Other highlights of his coaching tenure include 29 regular season tournament titles, 145 home victories, 97 regular season SEC wins, 14 SEC Tournament victories and a 72-23 (.758) all-time record against in-state foes including a 17-12 mark versus Auburn.

Under his guidance, Moody's pupils earned 12 All-American accolades and 22 All-SEC selections. Alabama student-athletes have garnered 45 Academic All-SEC awards in his tenure. Eight former Moody players continued their playing careers in the professional ranks including five who played in the WNBA.

Alabama Athletics Director Mal Moore paid tribute to Moody "for his commitment, dedication and hard work. He has led the program to some of its greatest accomplishments including the school's only Final Four appearance. He has truly helped bring national attention to the Alabama Women's Basketball program having led the team to 11 postseason appearances including eight NCAA Tournaments. He is also responsible for over 300 victories in his career, the only Alabama basketball coach to attain that level of success.

"His success goes beyond the court though, as Rick has also helped develop his players into productive students and citizens off the court. He is a shining example of what being a teacher and coach should be at this level."

While Moody's retirement brought positive comments from his fellow coaches around the SEC and the nation, attention quickly moved to where in the nation Moore would find Moody's replacement. Moore said that Hudson and Robbins had begun the process by attending many games to look at coaches of interest. He

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said those coaches were unaware that Alabama was "scouting" them. He said that there was no timetable for the hire and indicated candidates were participating in the NCAA Tournament.

Moore also said it would not necessarily be a head coach who was selected, but most believe Bama will try to find a coach with head coaching experience. And although no race or gender criteria will be applied, do not be surprised if a woman is the choice.

Moore said no athletics directors have been contacted regarding interview requests, but ordinarily that process does not begin until the search has been narrowed.

The search is nationwide, but it did include at least a local glance. There was support for Moody's top assistant, Brittney Ezell, but Ezell is reportedly looking for a job and is not expected to be a finalist to replace her boss. Madonna Thompson, like Ezell a former Alabama player who is in Tuscaloosa, is the head coach at Shelton State Community College. One of her players, guard Kiana Robinson, signed with Alabama. However, Thompson is also considered a long-shot.

Quinten Hillman, an assistant for one year, has landed a job as an assistant at Syracuse.

Anywhere in the nation where there is an opening for a head women's basketball coach, the name at the top of the search list is Dawn Staley, head coach at Temple. And Staley is certainly on Alabama's



Dawn Staley

radar screen.

The Philadelphia native played at Virginia and continues to be an outstanding professional player as well as one of the nation's most successful coaches. She was Atlantic 10 Coach of the Year for the second time in her five seasons at Temple and was a finalist for the Naismith Trophy as the nation's top coach as she took the Owls to the NCAA

Tournament. She has won two conference championships and earned four post-season bids (including three NCAA berths) since taking over the program in 2001.

Meanwhile, she remains a high-profile all-star player in her "summer job" with the Charlotte Sting of the WNBA. In the summer of 2004 she captured her third Olympic Gold Medal playing for the USA in the Athens Olympic Games. She was the flag-bearer for the United States team in the opening ceremonies.

She was the national prep player of the year at Dobbins Tech in Philadelphia (1986-89) and a three-time All-America at Virginia (1989-92), where her teams had a 110-21 record and made four NCAA Tournament appearances and three Final Four trips. She was National Player of the Year in 1991 and 1992.

She heads the Dawn Staley Foundation, which is aimed at giving inner-city children positive input. She was awarded the 1999 WNBA Entrepreneurial Spirit Award for her work with the foundation.

Another Naismith Award finalist who has been mentioned with the Bama opening is Joanne P. McCallie of Michigan State. The Spartans won the Big 10 Tournament and were ranked in the nation's top ten.

Joanne Boyle has had great success at Richmond and Katie Abrahamson-Henderson at Southwest Missouri State is a "hot name" in women's basketball coaching circles.

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Some Questions Remain Until Fall

by Mitch Dobbs

Wide receiver should be strength of 2005 Alabama

There are questions about a football team that finishes its season with a 6-6 record, including losses in its final three games. Such was the case with Alabama in 2004. This spring Crimson Tide Head Coach Mike Shula got answers to some of those questions, but others will remain for the start of fall practice in August.

Overall, Shula said his squad improved in the 15 days of spring drills that took place between February 22 and March 19.

Bama is in much better shape at quarterback than at the end of 2004, and the Tide's receiving corps is full of play-makers. The Tide's tight ends must develop, but showed promise in the spring. The offensive line and running backs have holes that weren't filled in the spring, and those will be the biggest offensive questions at least until August.

The quarterback position that cost Alabama so dearly after the third game of the 2004 regular season when starter Brodie Croyle was injured is much more in tact exiting the spring. Shula said Croyle's mechanics and release are as good as he has ever seen them. Croyle was fully healthy by the A-Day game, even though he did not participate in the scrimmage.

"We need him for the fall; we didn't need him for the spring game," Shula said.

In his non-participation in some team drills, Croyle found a protégé in grayshirt freshman John Parker Wilson. "Brodie helps me out a lot," Wilson said. "I ask him as many questions as I can. It's good to hear what he has to say about certain situations."

Croyle said following the A-Day game that Wilson, "has made huge strides, even in the

week from the last scrimmage to today. We have seen him making strides in practice every day."

Wilson, who is also a member of the Tide baseball team, participated in a handful of football practices in December and put all his focus into football in the spring. He led the first-team offense throughout spring drills. His numbers at A-Day were not spectacular—14-of-31 for 168 yards, one touchdown and two interceptions—but they were a sign of potential for Wilson.

"Now he's going to be a true freshman when he comes back in the fall," Shula said. "He's got all this experience behind him and it's going to really help him. I thought he did a nice job (at A-Day). At times, obviously, he has to learn to throw ball away, not taking a sack—all the things you continue to teach quarterbacks, but especially young quarterbacks. He's not ready to be a starter but he's much better now than he was a month ago. His timing has gotten better."

Tide receivers have gone from being a non-factor for the past year to the X-factor in the spring. Matt Caddell and D.J. Hall return as starters, and Tyrone Prothro and Keith Brown also have significant game experience under their belts.

Zeke Knight, who was Alabama's sixth-leading receiver in 2004 with 10 catches, had 12 receptions in the Tide's three spring scrimmages and four touchdown catches, more than any other receiver. Marcus McKnight had three nice catches in the A-Day Game. Will Oakley missed most of the spring with a pulled hamstring.

Offensive Coordinator Dave Rader said the current group of receivers are the deepest he has ever coached, and Shula said "that's going to be one of our strengths all of a sudden."

Redshirt freshman Nick Walker emerged as an offensive threat at tight end even after missing a week of practice with a bruised knee. Walker had three receptions for 59 yards and a touchdown in the A-Day Game.

"He's a big target," Shula said. "He can

jump. He can run. He has good hands. That's a dimension we've got to get going on our offense and that's going to make everything else work even better."

Sophomore Trent Davidson has been inconsistent as a pass-catcher, but is the best blocking tight end. Senior Greg McLain was still ailing from off-season elbow surgery at the beginning of the spring, but was able to practice more towards the end of spring training.

The Tide's offensive line will be the primary area of concern throughout the off-season. Three players have solidified spots on the line—right tackle Kyle Tatum, Center JB Clossner and left guard Antoine Caldwell.

Chris Capps held first-string duties over freshman Cody Davis in the spring, while Mark Sanders and Justin Moon battled for time at right guard. Freshman B.J. Stabler might be the favorite to win the right guard spot in the fall, but he was limited for most of the spring after having arthroscopic knee surgery in the off-season.

Offensive line coach Bob Connelly described his job with this year's line as "nerve racking" and "a work-in-progress," but he was happy with their progress through the spring.

"The thing that stood out to me (at A-Day) is that I didn't hear Mark Anderson's name called out over and over," Connelly said. "Our tackles are younger and playing against the most experienced players on defense." (Anderson had five tackles and one sack.)

Especially important for the young offensive line will be the players' ability to bulk up in the weight room. "I feel like we took a step in the right direction in the spring, but after the spring we have to continue to build in the off-season," Connelly said.

In 2004, none of the tight ends who participated in the spring game were in the mix at the position in the fall, and that might be the case for the running back spot this year.

Aaron Johns, the only healthy scholarshiped halfback in the spring, was mired at the bottom of the depth chart at the beginning for being described as "inconsistent" and "not sharp" in the winter conditioning program. Johns received carries with the first-team offense in the Tide's first scrimmage, but entered the A-Day game no better than even with walk-ons Rashad Johnson and Theo Townsend. Johns twisted his ankle early in the A-Day game after a reception for eight yards.

Johnson, a freshman, was the leading rusher in two of the Tide's three scrimmages. He had 12 carries for 48 yards and a touchdown in the A-Day game and 5 rush attempts for 41 yards and a touchdown in the Tide's first scrimmage.

Kenneth Darby had surgery for an injury

2005 Alabama Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Site	Series Record
Sept. 3	Middle Tennessee	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 1-0-0
Sept. 10	Southern Miss	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 33-6-2
Sept. 17	South Carolina	Columbia	Alabama leads, 10-2-0
Sept. 24	Arkansas	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 9-6-0
Oct. 1	Florida	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 19-12-0
Oct. 15	Mississippi	Oxford	Alabama leads, 41-9-2
Oct. 22	Tennessee	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 43-37-7
Oct. 29	Utah State (Homecoming)	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 1-0-0
Nov. 5	Mississippi State	Starkville	Alabama leads, 71-15-3
Nov. 12	LSU	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 43-20-5
Nov. 19	Auburn	Auburn	Alabama leads, 38-30-1
Dec. 3	SEC Championship Game	Atlanta	Alabama 2 wins, 3 losses

described as "sports hernia" on March 2. His recovery required up to six weeks of no physical activity before rehabilitation can begin. Darby, who was the leading rusher in 2004, is expected back for the start of the season in August, but there is uncertainty because of the nature of the injury.

Tim Castille's rehabilitation from a knee injury suffered in the 2004 Alabama-Tennessee game is on schedule, Shula said, and Castille is expected to be ready to run full speed by late May or early June. Castille's expected return would give the Tide backfield a versatile fullback/halfback with starting experience.

LéRon McClain benefited from the extra work in the spring, both as a fullback in the I-formation as well as in one-back sets. Fullbacks have been more of a pass-catching threat than a rushing threat in Shula's offense, and McClain has worked on being a more consistent receiver as well as a better blocker.

Junior walk-on Kyle Bennett has also benefited from more practice time. Bennett caught five passes in the spring scrimmages and rushed for a touchdown in the A-Day game.

In the spring, Bama worked on a variety of sets other than the normal two wide receiver, fullback, tight end, halfback alignment.

Defensively, 10 of the 11 spots will be filled by players with starting experience, but not all those players were available in the spring. The one open starting spot is at left defensive end where Wallace Gilberry, who led Alabama with 6.5 sacks in 2004, will step in for Todd Bates.

Defensive tackle Jeremy Clark missed practice after having arthroscopic knee surgery just days before spring training opened, and two back-up defensive tackles, Justin Britt and Dominic Lee, also missed significant time recovering from foot surgeries.

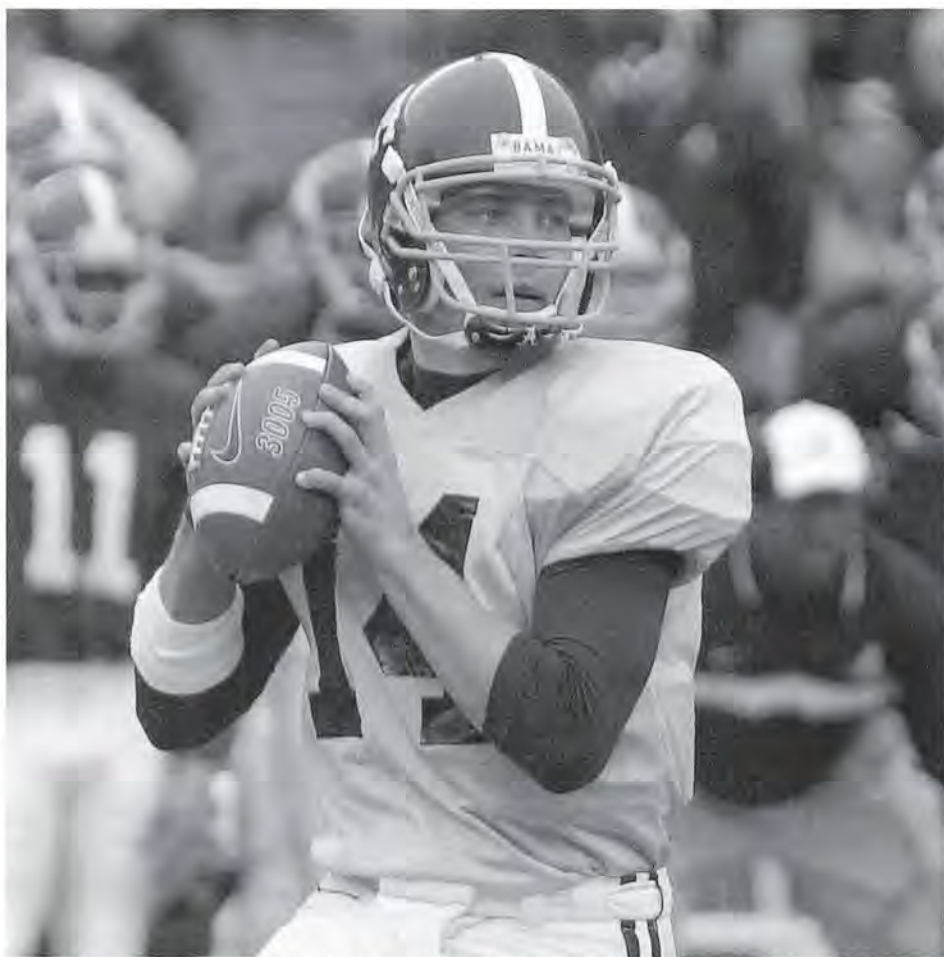
Lee had screws removed from his foot in the off-season, but was still in pain when spring began so he had another surgery to "clean up" things in his foot. Lee has been bothered by variations of the same injury since the spring of 2004.

Justin Britt had surgery in the off-season to alleviate pain and swelling in his feet. He returned for the latter part of spring practice and Defensive Coordinator Joe Kines was pleased with his play in the A-Day game.

The absence of some defensive tackles allowed more work for sophomore Curtis Dawson, who played sparingly in 2004, and walk-on J.P. Adams to have extra work in the spring. Kines said both have improved.

Alabama's defense needs to improve its run defense, but in the spring was without all tackles and featured ends more suited to pass-rushing than run-stopping. Last year in national statistics, the Tide was first in pass defense, second in total defense and seventh in scoring defense. Alabama ranked 37th in rushing defense in 2004.

The Tide's starting linebackers are solid,



John Parker Wilson will be a true freshman in the fall, but he was the quarterback with the first offense in much of spring practice. He's not likely to beat out Brodie Croyle, but he did get good experience this spring.

Barry Fikes Photo

perhaps even spectacular. Freddie Roach split time with Cornelius Wortham at middle linebacker in 2004 before moving over to weakside linebacker mid-year when Juwan Garth (now Juwan Simpson) was injured. DeMeco Ryans returned for his senior season and had a healthy and productive spring. He was backed by Terrence Jones.

Matt Collins stepped in at middle linebacker when Roach was bothered by a slight groin pull midway through spring. Collins was impressive in stopping the inside run in Alabama's March 12 scrimmage as well as in the A-Day game, but needs improvement in pursuing the outside run and making plays in the open field. Juke King also worked in the middle.

After moving from receiver to linebacker in the middle of 2004, Marcel Stamps spent time backing up Simpson at weakside linebacker. Kines said Stamps runs well and hits hard, but must learn the position more. Demarcus Waldrop has game experience at weakside.

The Tide secondary is the deepest area of the football squad, with both starting safeties and cornerbacks returning along with one corner and one safety with significant game experience.

At cornerback, Ramzee Robinson and

Anthony Madison are the returning starters, and both must fight to maintain their starting jobs over sophomore Simeon Castille. Castille was in a regular rotation with Robinson and Madison before a knee injury slowed him last year.

Cornerback Eric Gray had a solid spring before suffering a pulled hamstring late in spring drills, and had established himself as the fourth corner. Mid-year enrollee and rising true freshman Lionel Mitchell is also battling for early playing time. Mitchell had a good A-Day, with two pass break-ups and a tackle.

Returning starters Roman Harper and Charlie Peprah will quarterback the secondary. Junior Jeffrey Dukes earned more playing time at safety as the season progressed in 2004, and drew rave reviews for his off-season work ethic. Dukes had a solid spring and continued to earn the coaches trust, and Marcus Carter improved.

Shula said the kicking positions will not be determined until some time in August. Jamie Christensen did not participate in two scrimmages because of a pulled groin, but the Tide's excellent kickoff man in 2004 will battle C.J. Rhody, Ryan Saxby and others for extra point and field goal kicking duties. Jeremy Schatz, Jeff Aul and Joseph Mc-

Phillips were punting in the spring, and they will likely compete with newcomer Andrew Friedman for those duties in the fall. Friedman is projected as a punter and place-kicker.

TIDE NOTES—Tight Ends Coach and Special Teams Coordinator Dave Ungerer had knee surgery that forced him to miss the March 19 A-Day game. Shula said Ungerer was recovering well following the surgery.

Juwan Garth legally changed his name to Juwan Simpson in the spring. Simpson is the son of Mary Garth Simpson and the late Walter Simpson. Garth considered changing his name in high school, but feared doing so might negatively impact his college recruitment.

The opening of fall football camp has been set for Monday August 8. Alabama opens the 2005 season on September 3 facing Middle Tennessee in Tuscaloosa. At one point the game was scheduled to be played at Birmingham's Legion Field but the game was moved by mutual agreement. Alabama will no longer play home football games at Legion Field in Birmingham.

A-DAY STATISTICS

Passing (comp-att-yds): John Parker Wilson (14-31-168, TD, 2 INT); Marc Guillon (13-26-157, TD, INT); Adam Thrash (1-3-9); Total (28-60-234, 2 TD, 3 INT)

Rushing (att-yds): Rashad Johnson (12-48, TD); Trevino Pope (8-30); Theo Townsend (5-6); LëRon McClain (3-6); Mookie Chaney (2-22); Keith Brown (1-20); Will Denniston (1-7); Kyle Bennett (1-1, TD); John Parker Wilson (4-minus 18); Marc Guillon (1-minus 2); Adam Thrash (1-minus 6); Total (39-114, 2 TD)

Spring Football Awards

John Parker Wilson was named the Dixie Howell Most Outstanding Player of the A-Day game by media in attendance at Bryant-Denny Stadium after completing 14-of-31 passes for 168 yards and a touchdown managing Alabama's first-team offense against its first-team defense.

Wilson began the scrimmage with a pass to Rashad Johnson for 15 yards and capped the opening drive by hitting Nick Walker over the middle for 27 yards and a touchdown.

Wilson's day was tempered by two interceptions and three sacks, although one of the interceptions was redirected back onto the field of play after the pass to the sideline bounced off the helmet of Brandon Brooks and into the arms of linebacker Demarcus Waldrop.

The Dwight Stephenson Most Valuable Lineman at A-Day, also voted by the media, was JB Clossner. Shula said Clossner was, "by far one of the best leaders on offense, and for sure the best leader on the offensive line. You want young guys to come in and be like him and to say 'Watch how JB Clossner does it.'"

Shula and his coaching staff announced 14 spring awards before the A-Day game. They are:

- Lee Roy Jordan Headhunter—Linebacker Freddie Roach
- Jerry Duncan I Like to Practice—Defensive End Wallace Gilberry
- Billy Neighbors Most Improved Defensive Lineman—Defensive Tackle Rudy Griffin
- Bobby Johns Most Improved Defensive Back—Cornerback Simeon Castille
- Paul Crane Most Improved Offensive Lineman—Left Guard Antoine Caldwell
- Ray Perkins Most Improved Receiver—D.J. Hall
- Johnny Musso Most Improved Offensive Back—Fullback LëRon McClain
- Sylvester Croom Commitment to Excellence—Cornerback Anthony Madison
- Woodrow Lowe Most Improved Linebacker—Juwan Simpson
- Ozzie Newsom Most Improved Freshman—Wide Receiver Zeke Knight
- "Bear" Bryant Best Non-Scholarshipped Player—Linebacker Matt Collins
- Derrick Thomas Community Service—Fullback Tim Castille
- Mal Moore Leadership—Linebacker DeMeco Ryans
- Bart Starr Most Improved Quarterback—John Parker Wilson

Receiving (rec-yds): Zeke Knight (4-55, TD); Rashad Johnson (4-28); Marcus McKnight (3-51); Nick Walker (3-59, TD); Matt Miller (2-32); Mookie Chaney (2-21); Will Denniston (2-13); Kyle Bennett (2-10); Keith Brown (1-24); Matt Caddell (1-15); Brandon Brooks (1-10); Tanner Wickham (1-9); Aaron Johns (1-8); Trevino Pope (1-minus 1); Total (28-234, 2 TD)

Defensive Leaders: Ramzee Robinson (3 tackles, INT); Simeon Castille (5 tackles, TFL); Travis Robinson (3 tackles, INT, 2 PBU); Kenneth Vandervoort (4 tackles); Roman Harper (3 tackles); Jeffrey Dukes (3 tackles, 2 PBU); Mark Anderson (5 tackles, sack); Keith Saunders (3 tackles, 2 sacks); Rudy Griffin (2 tackles, sack); J.P. Adams (2 tackles, 2 TFL)

Guess At A Post-Spring Football Depth Chart

OFFENSE

Wide Receiver—D.J. Hall, Zeke Knight, Marcus McKnight, Brandon Brooks
Wide Receiver—Matt Caddell, Tyrone Prothro, Keith Brown, Matt Miller
Left Tackle—Chris Capps, Cody Davis
Left Guard—Antoine Caldwell, Justin Moon
Center—JB Clossner, Taylor Britt
Right Guard—B.J. Stabler*, Mark Sanders, Justin Moon
Right Tackle—Kyle Tatum, Drew Davis
Tight End—Trent Davidson, Nick Walker, Greg McLain
Quarterback—Brodie Croyle, John Parker Wilson, Marc Guillon
Fullback—LëRon McClain, Kyle Bennett, Will Denniston
Halfback—Rashad Johnson, Theo Townsend, Aaron Johns

*Stabler was limited in the spring with a knee injury and had limited playing time with the reserves in the A-Day game.

Note: Kenneth Darby missed the spring with sports hernia and is expected to recover and be first on the depth chart in the fall. Two-year starter at fullback Tim Castille missed the spring with a knee injury suffered last year.

DEFENSE

Left End—Wallace Gilberry, Stephen Kulback
Left Tackle—Curtis Dawson, Justin Britt
Right Tackle—Rudy Griffin, J.P. Adams
Right End—Mark Anderson, Chris Harris, Keith Saunders
Strongside Linebacker—DeMeco Ryans, Terrence Jones
Middle Linebacker—Freddie Roach, Matt Collins, Juke King
Weakside Linebacker—Juwan Simpson, Marcel Stamps, Demarcus Waldrop
Left Cornerback—Ramzee Robinson, Simeon Castille, Lionel Mitchell
Right Cornerback—Anthony Madison, Eric Gray
Strong Safety—Charlie Peprah, Marcus Carter
Safety—Roman Harper, Jeffrey Dukes

Note: Jeremy Clark is returning starter at left defensive tackle, but missed spring practice recovering from knee surgery.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Placekicker—Jamie Christensen, C.J. Rhody, Ryan Saxby
Holder—Jeremy Schatz, Matt Miller
Return Specialist—Tyrone Prothro, Brandon Brooks, D.J. Hall, Matt Caddell

Punter—Jeremy Schatz, Jeff Aul, Joseph McPhillips
Snapper—Drew Lane

Hard Work Is Secret To Success

by Kirk McNair

Senior middle linebacker
wants final year to be best

One could hardly hope for a more auspicious debut than that of Alabama linebacker Freddie Roach. But Roach is not looking back. His thoughts are ahead, to a successful Crimson Tide football season. The road to his final season at Bama began with a strong spring practice when he was voted by the coaching staff as winner of the Lee Roy Jordan Headhunter Award. Roach said, "I just try to come to work every day of practice and hit anything that moves."

Joe Kines, Alabama's defensive coordinator and linebackers coach, agreed. "He had a great winter and a great spring," Kines said. "He's about as focused as any linebacker I've seen in a long time. He takes a blue collar attitude and goes to work."

In 2002, following a redshirt season, Roach saw his first playing time in Bama's season-opening game. And it wasn't mop-up duty, even though the expectation might have been that Middle Tennessee would provide only token opposition. MTSU came to fight, and Roach found himself in the heat of a real battle late in the fourth quarter. Alabama was clinging to a 32-27 lead with MTSU in good field position at its 37. On first down, Roach stepped in front of a pass, picked it off, and followed the interference of safety Charles Jones for 41 yards and a touchdown. Just under three minutes remained and those would prove to be the decisive points in the 39-34 win. Roach had 10 tackles in that game and went on to earn Freshman All-Southeastern Conference and Freshman All-America.

Roach, 6-2, 245, was second team All-SEC last year even though he made a minor position change and started only about half of Alabama's games. After playing middle linebacker and starting in 22 games as a freshman and sophomore, Roach was limited in pre-season camp last year. "I had an MCL (medial collateral ligament) problem last year and missed two-a-days," Roach said. "It took a while to catch up. When you miss reps, it's critical. You can watch, but that's a different situation than doing it."

As a result, Roach started the 2004 season listed as co-starter with Cornelius Worham at middle linebacker, but Worham, a graduated senior, was getting the starts.

Then in the fifth game of the year Juwan

Garth (now Juwan Simpson) suffered a shoulder injury and Roach moved into his spot at weakside linebacker. "That was about the time I was getting back into the groove," Roach said. "Demarcus (Waldrop) finished the South Carolina game in place of Juwan, then started the next game against Kentucky. But Demarcus didn't have a great game against Kentucky, and they put me in."

Kines said, "Because of his injury he got off to a slow start, but once he got going, he got better every day."

When Roach moved to outside linebacker last fall, it wasn't completely new to him. "I had been an outside linebacker in high school," he said. "It's kind of nice to play there because you don't have those big guys coming right at you."

He said that outside and inside have similarities, that sometimes the linebacker must be very aggressive and sometimes more disciplined. "I'd say that outside linebacker is easier from a technique standpoint, but more difficult in that you have to be more disciplined at outside linebacker. The will (weakside) linebacker position I played last year is sort of like a safety, a last line of defense. It's like a mirror of the strong safety."

He said when he moved to weakside linebacker, "It was easy to learn, but tough to play. There's a tendency to want to get inside. Depending on what the offense is doing, there will be days where the outside linebacker will make a lot of plays and days where he won't have many opportunities."

The knee injury and the change of position weren't the only difficulties Roach faced in 2004. "The year got off to a rough start when I was accused of something I didn't do," he said. In a bizarre event, police in Sheffield misidentified Roach for an incident at a nightclub. Later former Tider Earnest Nance would turn himself in and confess to the incident. Roach, who was in Tuscaloosa at the time of the event, said, "I don't blame Earnest. I don't talk to him about that when we see each other." Nance continues to be suspended from the team, although he remains in school at The University.

Roach thinks he could play any of the three linebacker spots.

There is no doubt he is a good all-around athlete playing football. At Brooks High School in Killen, Roach was named the Alabama Sports Writers Association 3A Back of the Year after he rushed for 1,277 yards and 18 touchdowns. (Former Tide defensive end Todd Bates was the 3A Lineman of the Year in 2000.)

When recruiters came calling, some—including Michigan—wanted Roach as a run-

ning back. But he wanted to play defense. He also had a fine senior year on defense with 194 tackles, 23 behind the line, on a team that went 11-2.

Roach started playing varsity football as a seventh grader. He was already 6-2 and weighed over 190 pounds. He had early playing time at quarterback. "I liked the passing part, but didn't like getting hit," he said.

After a good freshman year at Alabama, Roach said his sophomore year "was not what I expected of myself." But Roach started in 12 games in 2003 and was the Tide's fifth-leading tackler. He had 15 tackles against Arkansas.

Roach and his teammates were aware of the disappointment in Alabama's defense a couple of years ago. "We heard people talking about getting rid of Coach Kines," Roach said. "It wasn't him. The players have to do the job. I'll be the first to stand up for him. He was teaching it. We just weren't getting it. Now we get it."

He said that Kines has done a good job of planning a defense that "puts responsibilities on the players. If we do our jobs—and he expects us to do our jobs—then results are good."

Roach said, "I don't think I'm doing so much different physically, but I have a better idea of what I'm doing and why I'm doing it. And just as important, I have 10 guys around me who know what to do and are doing their jobs."

"Once you have guys who have experience in the system...well, there's no substitute for experience."

Roach believes the defense made great strides in spring practice this year. He said he was particularly pleased with the performance of back-up players. At his position, he wasn't the only spring training award winner. Matt Collins was winner of the award for the best walk-on in spring practice. "The second team has come a long way, so when we come out the defense doesn't lose a step," Roach said.

He said, "Players come in from high school and they are shell-shocked by the speed of the game. I thought I adjusted to it pretty well, but I had a redshirt season. I'm glad I had that year. I was behind Saleem Rasheed. I think I've come a long way, but I had to be patient. I think it will pay off."

Kines said, "He's basically been a starter since his freshman year. He's played a long time and seen a lot of snaps. You're not going to confuse him very often."

Roach said he is "excited" about the possibilities for 2005. "It's my last go-around, so I want to make it my best one," he said. "We have good guys around me and good competition. There is no tomorrow. We have to

get it done every Saturday. I'm expecting big things."

Last year's Alabama defense was close to being best in the nation statistically. "Because we were so close last season, we want it even more this year," Roach said. "Last year the offense started great, then had some injuries. Of course it's better for the defense if the offense is keeping the ball, but we have to worry about our side of the ball."

He said, "The way we have worked to get better, I think we can have a big year. You don't want to work that hard and not get where you want to be."

Like most players at the level which Alabama plays, Roach would like to have a chance to play professional football. And he won't sacrifice his degree to get that chance. He said he thought about leaving early for a try at pro ball, but decided to come back for his final season in part because he will have his degree in December.

"My mother really wanted me to get my degree, particularly since I was so close," he said. "You never know what might happen, so I'll have my degree to fall back on."

Freddie Roach has started most of his Crimson Tide career and looks forward to going out on a high note as a senior. He had an excellent spring.

Butch Dill Photo



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Maybe It Wasn't Such A Bad Break

by Greg Wallace

Redshirt freshman lineman sees benefits to having been observer in 2004

By nature, freshmen come into their first season of college football with their hearts set on playing. In their minds, they're going to come in and contribute right away; maybe dominate. One thing they are sure of: they're definitely going to play.

So one can imagine what a disappointment last fall was to Antoine Caldwell.

The Alabama offensive lineman started his true freshman season last fall as the most impressive young lineman on the Crimson Tide's roster. Both Head Coach Mike Shula and Offensive Line Coach Bob Connelly raved about the Montgomery native, and playing time seemed only a matter of when, not if.

In an instant, all that changed.

In a Sunday morning practice, Caldwell broke a bone in his left foot when he stepped on a teammate's foot. Moments later, he was propped up on a sideline table, his season over. By the time his foot healed enough for him to compete, the season was halfway through, and he'd become a redshirt.

"It was a bummer," Caldwell said.

This spring, that bummer turned into a boon. His left foot fully recovered, Caldwell, 6-3, 281, re-emerged as the Tide's best young offensive lineman. He was recognized by the assistant coaches this spring as winner of the Paul Crane Award as the most improved offensive lineman. He finished spring practice with a choke-hold on the left guard spot, and appears primed to become a four-year starter.

Last August, Caldwell said, "I came in and was competing. I wanted to compete against the guys who were in front of me. Competition makes the guys in front of you a little better. So I still think I accomplished my job, even though I wasn't on the field. Looking back, it was a blessing in disguise to be red-shirted."

Coming to Alabama wasn't necessarily a slam-dunk for Caldwell. He grew up in Montgomery in a "split" household; his father was a "big" Auburn fan, while his mother favored Alabama.

But those loyalties shifted towards the Crimson Tide thanks to their hard work in his recruitment. Caldwell says Alabama recruiters came in "early and strong."

"I just followed my heart," he said. "I thought loyalty was more important than any other thing that was going on at that time. I just stuck with it, and I'm glad I made that decision."



Antoine Caldwell had an excellent spring at left guard, where he is expected to be the starter in 2005. As a true freshman last year, Caldwell had been projected for playing time, but suffered a season-ending broken foot.

Barry Fikes Photo

His broken foot caused some doubt, but Caldwell says he learned plenty last fall even without a down of playing experience. In addition to his coaches, he had excel-

lent teachers: senior linemen Wesley Britt and Evan Mathis, both four-year starters.

"Those guys are great football players, and they'll probably go on to have great pro ca-

reers," Caldwell said of Britt and Mathis. "But just sitting back and watching, sometimes, you learn a lot more than actually being in there—watching how a starter handles this technique, how I can do something a little better."

Mathis, said Caldwell, was his biggest mentor, largely because Caldwell spent the fall backing him up.

"He was already more physically advanced than I was," Caldwell said. "I sat back, got my technique down and wanted to see how I could get the upper hand on some of those guys."

He kept that advantage through hard work in the off-season, and a stellar spring. Now, Mathis, Britt and fellow senior Danny Martz are gone. Three open spots loom on the offensive line. And Caldwell has all but locked down one of them—at left guard.

"It's his to lose, absolutely," Connelly said. "I don't want to say anything's solidified, because my goal as a football coach is to bring in a guy better than what we've got every year, so I don't want anybody ever feeling comfortable, and don't want to allow complacency to set in. But he's done a great job. He's earning the respect of his peers, he's earning the respect of his football team, and he's doing a good job for us so far."

Connelly admits that Caldwell's technique still needs plenty of polish, as is typical for young offensive linemen. But his strength and athleticism, Connelly said, are things you "can't coach." Those things, said Connelly, set Caldwell apart.

"Most guys need a couple years in the weight room to get bigger, stronger, faster and be able to play at this level and hold up physically," Connelly said. "He has great knee-bend, he has great hip flexion, and he has great tenacity. So he's done a really, really good job for us. I'm not afraid at all to put him out there and I think he can hold up in the SEC."

Caldwell also has a strong personality and a sharp mind—two things that are key for the success of any offensive lineman in today's complicated, technique-heavy offensive systems.

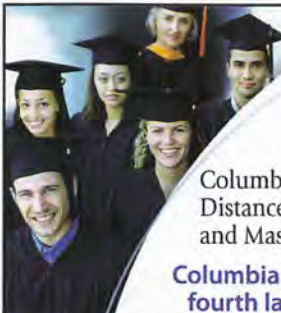
"He's a fantastic young man," Connelly said. "He's very bright, he's humble, he understands what he's got to do, he understands that there's a lot of work, and it's a work in progress for him every day. I'm very pleased with where he's at. He's still got a long ways to go, but the things he's done up to this point have got me very, very pleased."

That is largely a credit to Caldwell's modest attitude. Instead of being frustrated by last season's injury troubles, Caldwell entered this spring with a vengeance, making a starting spot this fall largely a formality.

"Coach Connelly made it evident from the beginning that nobody's spot is solidified," he said. "I was trying to come in, make an impression, and get my spot. I think I did that—made a good impression—and I'm looking forward to this season."

Hey, better late than never, right?

"It's great," Caldwell said. "Just knowing that all the hard work I put into it last year—getting into the game, getting the speed down, coming out here and adjusting, it seems like it's really paying off."



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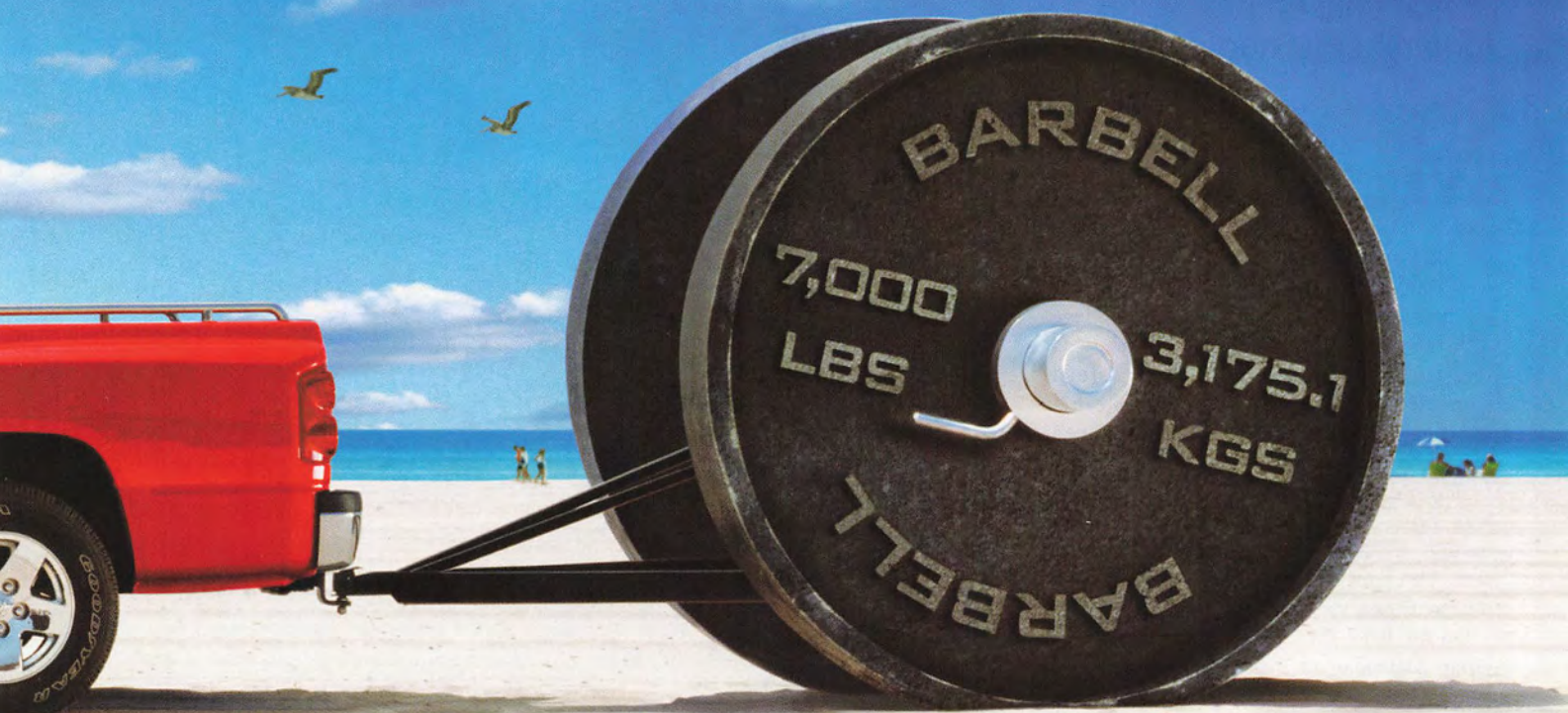
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Morrow Thomley:

New Year Bringing New Hope

by Peter Edmund

After lost (and losing) year,
senior season promising
for pitcher turned outfielder

Morrow Thomley is trying to put the disappointing 2004 baseball season behind him. The Tuscaloosa native is doing that with a move from the pitching mound to the outfield.

Thomley, a junior college transfer who pitched in the 2003 National Junior College Athletic Association World Series, was learning the ropes of Southeastern Conference baseball when he broke his hand less than two weeks before the Tide's season opener last year.

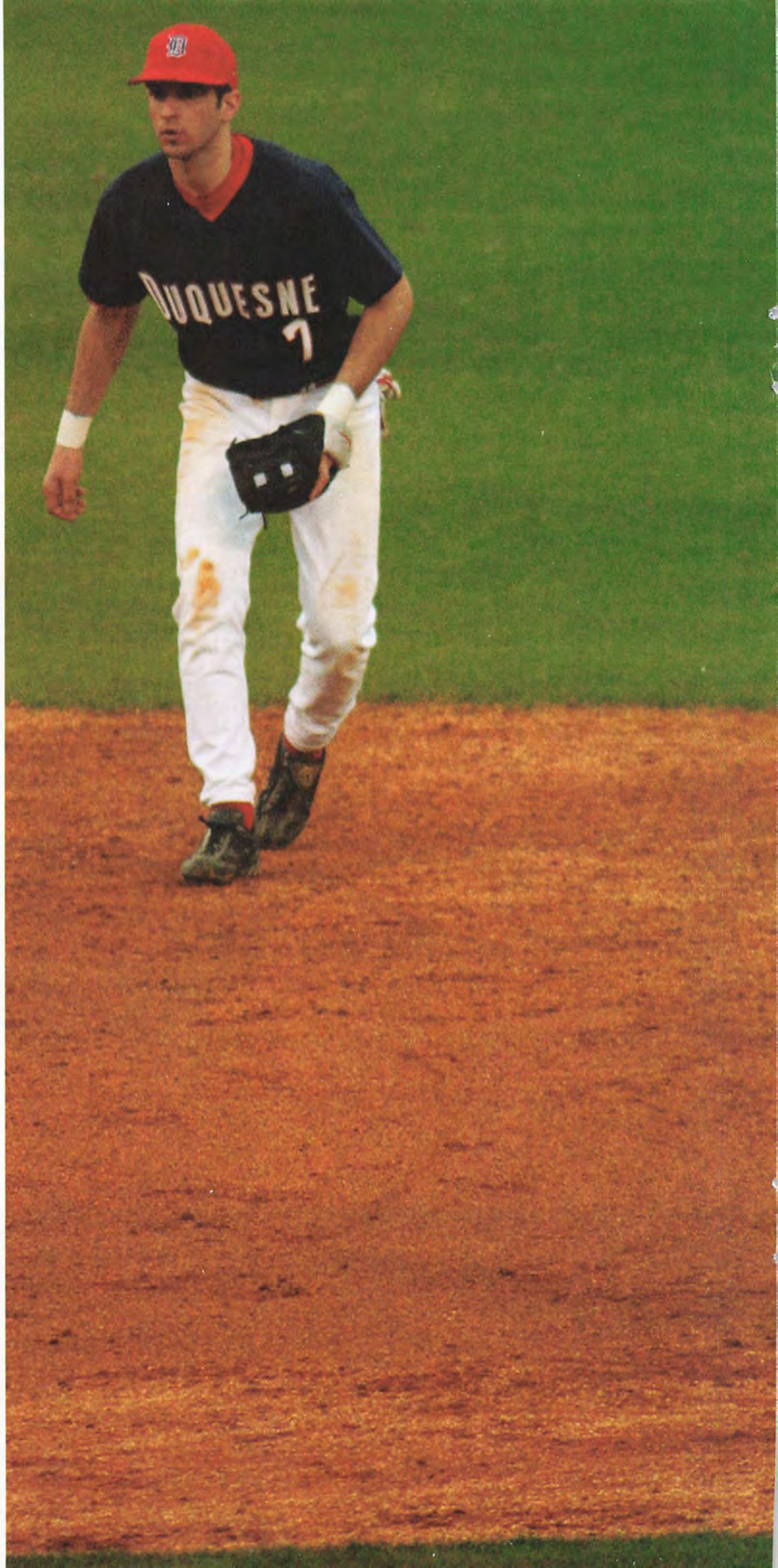
The rehabilitation and recovery period was slow. And once he got back on the mound, he suffered severe pain in his right arm. The pain got worse and worse, and so did the team's season.

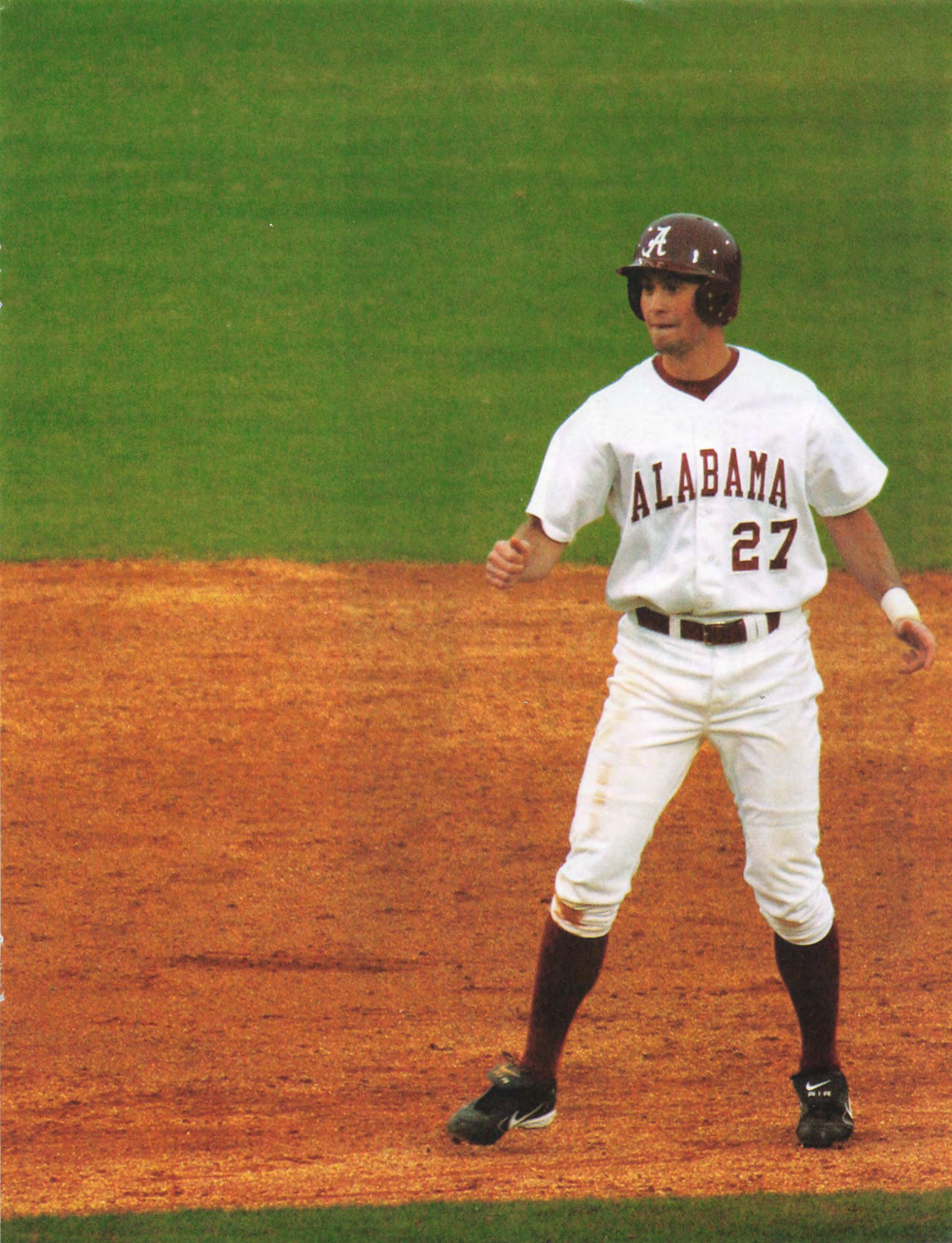
On the field, the Crimson Tide was struggling. Alabama lost one-run games left and right. Thomley saw spot duty as an outfielder, pinch-hitter and pinch-runner in early games. After that, he never played again.

"It was the most miserable season ever," Thomley said. "I hurt my hand two weeks before the season started. It was a transition year, too. I was coming from a junior college to a Division I program. We were not winning. It would have been easier if we were winning games. It's not a lot of fun at practice when you are not winning.

"Plus, I couldn't help the team because I was hurt. My arm was so sore I couldn't throw. At the time, and even coming back this fall, I would have considered myself more of a pitcher than an outfielder. But that

Morrow Thomley came to Alabama as a pitching prospect, but after injuring his arm the senior from Tuscaloosa is an every day player in the outfield.







Morrow Thomley is Alabama's leading hitter as the Crimson Tide baseball team begins Southeastern Conference play. The junior college transfer missed basically all of last season with an injury.

is how things work out. I lost that year and there is nothing I can do. In some ways it may be a blessing in disguise. This is my last year, so if I don't do something about it now then it's over."

Thomley's senior season almost never materialized. Last summer the former Central

High School product thought about hanging up the spikes, finishing school, and moving on with his life.

"Last year taught me a lot," he said. "It was always fighting through adversity. I was hurt, we were down. It seemed like we were always losing one-run games. Those are the

worst. Even when you are not playing, it hurts to lose a one-run game.

"During the summer, I thought about concentrating on school, because I have done well in class. I decided to give it another chance. I love playing baseball. I love Alabama. It was a low-point in my baseball career. I had never sat the bench before, never been hurt."

Thomley came back to The Capstone for his senior season and worked last fall as pitcher and position player. When the team returned from its Christmas break, Thomley was again working with the pitchers and trying to get batting swings, too.

About a week before the season opener at Hawaii, Thomley was approached by Coach Jim Wells about becoming just an outfielder and hitting every day. Thomley was receptive to the idea. "I was not upset at all," Thomley said. "Coach Wells thought I could help the team more by just being a hitter. Then I could concentrate on just one thing. My arm was always hurting me when I was pitching.

"This way I knew my arm would be fine and could pretty much let it loose every day, which I can do now. There is a lot of extra things you have to do to be a pitcher and to be a two-way player is really hard. It is a lot more work. Not that I was not willing to do that, I was willing to work. I think it is a lot easier just doing one thing.

"We were not hitting the ball well early. I started out with a couple of big hits and I made a couple of plays on defense. I think at that time, no one else was doing anything special with the bat. I was pretty consistent. I was getting a hit or two a game and driving a run or two, so I guess they figured they would just stick with me."

The decision to play his senior year has been beneficial. Thomley has established himself as the every day right fielder and is hitting in the middle of the order.

Entering SEC play, Thomley was the Crimson Tide's leading hitter .377 (26-for-69) and second-leading run producer (12 RBI). He led the SEC with three triples and ranked second on the UA team with nine extra base hits, including a pair of home runs.

Thomley, who was a star two-way player at Beville State in 2002-03, hit home runs and pitched in the 2003 JuCo World Series.

"I'm not shocked," Thomley said. "Everybody else seems to be a little shocked. I guess I was not expected to be a starting position player. It's a nice surprise. It's nice

'BAMA, Inside The Crimson Tide/APRIL, 2005

to be playing every day instead of sitting on the bench. I got my chance to play and I've done well so far."

Thomley made his first start of the season at Hawaii and went 1-for-3 with a double and RBI in the Tide's 9-5 come-from-behind win. In a double header sweep of UNC Asheville, Thomley was 5-for-10 with two RBI against the Bulldogs.

He slugged his first career home run in a win over Samford and went 4-for-7 with five RBI in back-to-back wins over McNeese State and Birmingham Southern.

Thomley even etched his name in the Bama record books by going 5-for-6 with a home run and three RBI in a loss to Miami (Ohio). The five hits tied the Alabama single-game record for most hits.

"I think I am progressing," he said. "I don't think anybody would have projected me before the season to have hit in the middle of the lineup and drive in runs. I think that (junior 3B Evan) Bush and I are hitting the ball pretty well and seems like when we hit the ball, our offense seems to get rolling. Bush and I talk about it, too. When we hit the ball, good things happen. We don't really worry about one or two guys getting the job done. I

think we have the potential with this lineup for everybody to hit."

While Thomley is having success this season, it makes it even more special that he is doing it in front of his family and friends in his hometown. He said, "I grew up here. My parents grew up here and their parents grew up here. My dad is a photographer in town and my mom works for The University."

He said being from Tuscaloosa made life harder last year. He said, "Last year everyone wanted to know why I wasn't playing and why the team wasn't hitting and questions about everything. You have to take the good and the bad."

He has had his share of good and bad. Thomley has turned a negative into a positive with hard work and dedication. Those attributes have produced good numbers thus far and Thomley expects even bigger numbers in SEC play.

"We are a better team this year, no doubt," he said. "We all worked hard in the off season. I think it's showing. We are better than last year. This team is ready to face some big time pitching and prove that we can win. The main thing is keep getting the big hits and keep coming back. I think this team is scrappy."

"We don't have an Andy Phillips, Roberto Vaz or G.W. Keller who will hit 20 home runs and bat .400, but we can still find a way to win. That type of player helps, but we can still find a way to win. We can still win."

"The seniors all want to go to Omaha. That is all we care about. There are going to be some tough games. It will be fun, too. We have four CWS (College World Series) teams coming here to play. There is nothing better than having them in our own backyard. I think we are going to surprise a lot of people."

"We'll try to get to Hoover (the SEC Tournament) and take it from there. We want to get to 40 wins so we can host a regional and super regional and go to Omaha. If you play good in the SEC, there is no reason we can't do that. Last year we struggled in SEC play, but we felt we were just as good as anybody. We had so many games that were hit and miss. So many one run games it was so ridiculous. Coach Wells talks about the little things. And those little things can turn a season around. All it takes is one hit here, one hit there."

Thomley has experienced the little things in life and in baseball. Now, he's having more fun on the diamond than ever before. And the 2004 season is a distant memory.



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Scholarships Are On The Line

by Mitch Dobbs

NCAA surprises Bama, others with penalty-driven academic progress rules

In February the National Collegiate Athletic Association took another step in a fight that has been waged to impose penalties on athletics programs whose student-athletes do not live up to certain academic standards by releasing the first round of scores for schools and their athletics teams' academic progress.

Alabama's football team did not fare well, scoring in a range that would subject the squad to scholarship reductions ("contemporaneous penalties" in NCAA lexicon) if there is no improvement in the next grading cycle. The penalties would last one year. The scores were only preliminary, however, much like a

mid-term grade for the universities' athletics programs.

The initial scores that were released came from the 2003-2004 academic year. These scores will be combined with results from the 2004-2005 academic year to comprise the first score that could impact scholarship numbers as soon as December of this year.

Schools need to maintain an APR score of 925 or higher to keep clear of any scholarship hits. Alabama's score in football was 880, in the lower ranges among NCAA football programs and last in the Southeastern Conference.

But what has Alabama and many other school officials frustrated is not the score itself, but rather the fact that guidelines for what would result in penalties were not revealed to them until January of this year, basically three quarters into the game. The NCAA "cut score" of 925 was set by the Committee on Academic Performance (CAP) and approved by the NCAA Division-I board of Directors on January 10, 2005, and schools received their APR scores in late February 2005.

"It's an alarmist report," said Jon Dever, Alabama's director of Academic Services for

Intercollegiate Athletics. "None of the numbers count. People are making assumptions that might not be real."

The assumption, and prima facie evidence is that football student-athletes at Alabama generally fall far short of the academic success of other programs, but there is also evidence to the contrary.

"When you see 16 seniors, 12 of them who had their degrees and two more that will get them this spring, it makes you feel pretty good," Tide Head Football Coach Mike Shula said of his 2004 squad. "And yet how all these rates are determined, we still have a lot of work to do to get to where we are going to feel comfortable. I'm not sure anybody will ever feel comfortable any year as far as being susceptible to losing scholarships for a year for being below a certain cutoff point."

Many in the Bama athletics department feel that operating under NCAA bowl sanctions for two years because of prior penalties had a heavy impact on the APR score. One reason that bowl sanctions might have led to poor academic progress for the 2003-2004 academic year because players who, in the fall, normally have to maintain eligibility for

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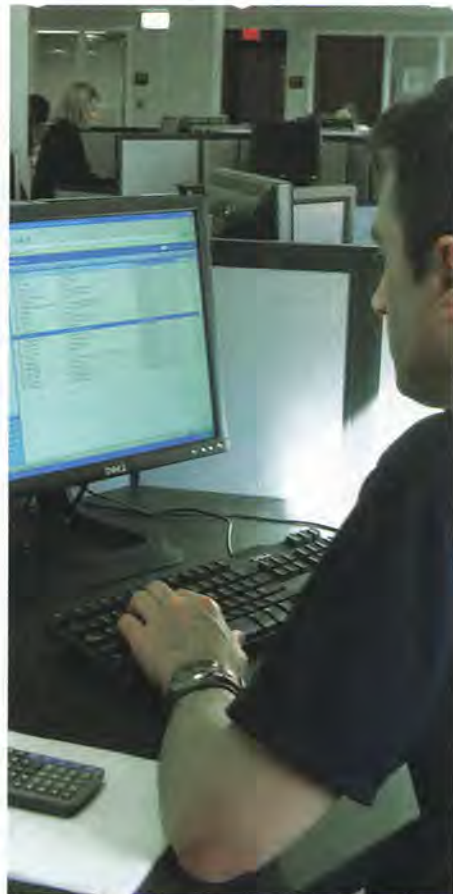
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Alabama athletes are now using the state-of-the-art academics center in renovated Bryant Hall.

Barry Fikes Photo

the spring semester to be able to participate in a bowl game lacked that incentive in 2003, when the data first began being compiled. This rings especially true for 2003 seniors, or juniors who intended to leave The University to pursue a professional career before graduating.

The names of players who did not meet the academic performance standards are not released to the media because of federal privacy laws and The University declined to release the number of football players who fell into that category. Those players who did not make the progress required and left school will not count towards penalties even if Alabama falls below the cut score number again. Only players who fail the requirements for the 2004-2005 year (and beyond) will lead to penalties if the squad's number is not above 925.

Knowing why the score was bad is a major step in correcting the problem. Dever said no school should ever feel comfortable with where it stands, but that Alabama has a plan to get the score up.

"We are concerned, but knowing where we had issues, the concern has gone considerably down. At the time we got the rules of the game we were three-fourths of the way through with the report," he said. "The frustrating thing is the lack of knowledge of how it was going to work, what the cut score would be, and the changing landscape of this."

The NCAA says that the 925 cut score is roughly equivalent to an expected 50 per cent graduation rate, using the current federal methodology for calculating graduation rates. But things are still changing. The NCAA has made the APR cut score a moving target, noting that it will be adjusted to ensure that teams falling below the 50 per cent graduation standard would be at risk for contemporaneous penalties.

A year ago, when the ongoing campaign for academic reform by NCAA President Myles Brand was approved, it was billed as a landmark academic reform package aimed at dramatically strengthening the educational success of student-athletes.

"This landmark legislation marks the beginning of a sea of change in college sports," Brand said in an April 29, 2004 press release. "These are strong and well thought out reforms that are critically necessary to ensuring that student-athletes are academically successful. For the first time ever, the NCAA will have the ability to hold institutions and teams accountable for the academic progress of their student-athletes."

Since the release of each school's APR score in late February the so-called reforms have created strong reactions across the country. "UA Football Could Lose Scholarships," a Tuscaloosa News headline read. "New APR may cost Tide, Tigers," The Birmingham News said.

But that type of reaction was not isolated to the Heart of Dixie. Various athletics programs including Tennessee, LSU, Louisville, San Diego State, DePaul, Kentucky, Washington,

Purdue, Ohio State, Michigan's state schools, and many other around the country received negative publicity with the release of the APR data.

The timeframe of the release of the grading standards to the institutions followed closely by the release of APR scores to the public was inherently designed to cast shame in every direction before any proper adjustments to improve the score could be made. CBS Sportline dubbed APR the NCAA's new scarlet letters.

Brand continued the public relations offensive in the February 28 issue of the NCAA News, commenting that, "Because the point scale that comprises the APR rewards eligibili-

ty and retention equally, programs must now take well thought out chances on at-risk prospects because the consequences for those prospects' academic failure will be serious."

Recruiting "safer" academic prospects will be part of the plan, but so will steering prospects into easier majors and more coercive measures to keep student athletes on-campus and ahead in their academic work throughout the calendar year—no summers off.

Said Shula, "We've done a lot of research on this with Jon Dever and everybody involved. We have a plan and that plan will be a work in progress in getting our rates to that (925)

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Jon Dever is director of Academic Services for Intercollegiate Athletics. All athletes now have access to an extraordinary academic center in recently renovated Bryant Hall. Once the home of Crimson Tide football and men's basketball players, the building now houses computer, math, and writing laboratories as well as classrooms and offices of the academic staff.

Barry Fikes Photo

level. We all know where we need to be and we'll work hard every year. It (APR) has changed a lot of things in college athletics. Our goal is when guys come in to have them graduate and win."

The NCAA imposed a system that purports to measure each team's "academic progress rate" (or APR) and assess penalties in the form of scholarship reductions to those schools not living up to the standards set.

The idea is far more simple than the actual scoring and penalty system.

Each player on athletic scholarship represents two points that can be earned for the squad in a semester. A player earns one point per semester by maintaining his academic eligibility and another point for enrolling at the same school in the following semester. The total number of points earned is then divided by the total number of points possible yielding a percentage. That percentage is multiplied by 1,000 just for looks.

If the APR score stays above 925 there is no chance of scholarship reductions. If a squad is below the 925 cut score, however, one must review each athlete's records to determine the number of penalties to be assessed. In that case, for each student who scored zero of two possible points there will be a reduction of one scholarship from the total allowed in that particular sport. Therefore, the number of "0-

for-2"s are directly linked to the number of scholarship losses.

There is a 10 per cent yearly cap (rounded up to the next whole number) on the total number of scholarships that can be taken. For example, football could lose no more than nine scholarships per year of the 85 which teams are allowed.

No exceptions have yet been developed for schools who have players transfer under NCAA sanctions or for any other reason, but the NCAA News said a subcommittee of the on appeals has been appointed with the authority to "waive contemporaneous penalties if mitigating circumstances warrant such action." No specific criteria have been set, but possible key considerations may include mitigating circumstances and "institutional mission," the NCAA News said.

The even scarier part of the NCAA's academic reform package is yet to come. Brand has promised to add "historical" penalties that would have a greater impact than the current penalties. Dever said those penalties would come after four years of academic data are compiled, but no one knows what the standards of success or failure will be.

The yet defined penalties will be associated with academic failure over time and may include scholarship reductions, recruiting limitations, ineligibility for NCAA team championships, and, in the most extreme cases, restricted membership status for the institution.

While no parameters have been set on what will constitute a "historical" penalty, they are nevertheless expected to begin in 2006.

Academic reform is in place for all sports, not just football. Alabama's women's basketball (911) and outdoor men's track (920) fell below the 925 APR cut rate. However, because of the small size of the squads a statistical method was established by the CAP indicating those squads "have an estimated APR upper confidence boundary of 925 or above." In other words, they are expected to be in the clear when more data is gathered.

Men's basketball, women's cross country, and softball set the standard, scoring perfect 1,000 APR scores.

In sports such as baseball, teams in Alabama and Mississippi are already at a scholarship deficit to SEC counterparts who can offer in-state players free tuition paid for by state lottery which do not count towards the athletics 11.7 equivalency scholarships the team is allowed to award.

In other words, in-state players are "free" to the lottery state schools.

The new academic progress rules will only do more damage in that regard. For example, LSU baseball players from the state of Louisiana attending school on the lottery scholarship will not be held accountable in the academic reform rules. If they fail to graduate it will not hurt the APR score or subject the team to scholarship cuts.

Will Alabama Add Another Signee?

by Andrew Bone

Early effort landed Bama Top Ten class

Will Alabama or won't Alabama add another signee for men's basketball? Although the Crimson Tide of Coach Mark Gottfried signed one of the nation's best classes last November, the Tide may elect to replace Kennedy Winston in the late signing period beginning in April. Bama lost two scholarship players during the season, redshirt freshman forward Akin Adkins and true freshman guard Glenn Miles leaving the team. Winston, who just completed his junior year, announced he will leave for the NBA; and incoming freshman Richard Hendrix, also has interest in the NBA.

Unless there is an additional signee, Alabama will be under the limit of 13 scholarship players in 2005-06, including Justin Jonus, a walk-on who was given a scholarship last winter when the defections opened up a slot. All scholarships are for one year only. During the past season freshman guard Albert Weber left school for a couple of weeks to take care of "personal business" at his home in Louisiana, but seems to be firmly in the Alabama basketball fold.

The general feeling is that Alabama did not plan to add another signee before Winston's announcement. If Bama does add a player this spring, the best bet is that it will be guard Brandon Hollinger, 5-9, 165, of Mobile LeFlore. Scout.com no longer lists Alabama as active with 6-4 left-handed guard Jamont Gordon, a Nashville native playing at Oak Hill Academy in Mouth of Wilson, Virginia.

Scout.com ranks the incoming Alabama recruiting class as ninth best in the nation, but that assumes that Hendrix, the 6-8, 255-pound power forward from Athens elects to make college his next basketball stop. Hendrix, a five-star prospect ranked as the nation's fourth best forward prospect by Scout.com, chose Alabama over North Carolina.

Hendrix has been named as one of the ten finalists for the Naismith Trophy for the 2005 male player of the year. He was named Mr. Basketball by the Alabama Sports Writers Association and selected for the McDonald's All-American game.

Hendrix has said he will go to the NBA if he is projected as a top 20 pick. While there are few, if any, legitimate NBA draft models showing Hendrix as a top 20 pick, it's likely that Gottfried won't sleep soundly until Hendrix announces a decision to sit out this year's draft.

"If the opportunity presents itself for me to be a first round pick, then I would have to strongly consider it," Hendrix said. "It has always been my goal to play in the NBA, and it would be better to go sooner than later. I would probably have to go ahead and pursue my dream."

Hendrix, who played for his father, Venard, averaged 24 points, 15 rebounds, six blocked shots, and six assists as a senior. He led his team to the Final Four.

Bama also signed a power forward in Yamene Coleman, 6-9, 220, from Wilcox-Central in Camden, the school that sent former guard and Crimson Tide favorite Antoine Pettway to Tuscaloosa. As a senior, Coleman averaged 20 points and 12 rebounds per game.

Wilcox-Central had only an 18-12 record this year after reaching the Final Four as a junior and winning the 5A state championship his sophomore year. Coleman said, "I had received offers from Kentucky, Florida, Miami, Florida State, and Memphis. I chose Alabama because it's close to home and it's a very good school." Speaking of school, he said he has some work to do in the classroom to be eligible.

Alonzo Gee, 6-6, 205, from Dwyer High School, Palm Beach, Florida, is a scoring machine and in the running for Mr. Basketball for the state of Florida. As a junior, Gee led his team to the Class 5A state championship, was named to the All-State Tournament team, and named all-



Richard Hendrix made Alabama his college choice...if he goes to college.

Photo by Dan Henry, Decatur Daily

state honorable mention. Gee exploded over the summer following his junior year, and was named MVP at the Adidas Showcase national tournament.

Gee is ranked as the ninth best prospect in the country at small forward, and is one of the top 75 overall prospects by Scout.com.

Gee has played behind great players, Lee Goldwire, now at Charlotte, and former guard Corey Young. Dwyer's coach, Fred Ross, told Gee after his freshman year, "I think you have the potential to be the best we've ever had."

Gee will play in two all-star games in April, one in Orlando and one in Louisville, Kentucky.

The Tide went to the junior college ranks to sign Ray George, a guard from Georgia Perimeter in Clarkston, Georgia. George, who prepped at Southwest Dekalb High School in Decatur and at Mount Zion Christian Academy in Durham, North Carolina, was second team junior college all-region as a sophomore.

George averaged 20 points and 5.4 steals per game and led the conference in assists (9.4 average) and overall field goal percentage, hitting 69 per cent of his field goal attempts. George was among the conference leaders in free throw percentage (76 per cent) and three-point field goal percentage (63 per cent).

Georgia Perimeter had a 23-7 record.

As a freshman, at Georgia Perimeter, George averaged 21 points, and ten assists.

Looking way ahead, the Crimson Tide landed a commitment for the class of 2006 from one of the Southeast's top point guards, Mikhail Torrance. Torrance, 6-3, 185, will be a senior next year at Mary Montgomery High School of Semmes.

As a junior, Torrance averaged 18 points, five rebounds, and nine assists per game. He is known particularly for being ambidextrous in everything he does on the basketball court.

Torrance has the great ability to dribble, pass, and shoot right or left-handed.

Other upcoming senior prospects linked with Bama for signing next fall are:

Stanley Robinson, 6-9, 212, Woodlawn High School, Birmingham; Michael Washington 6-9, 210, Heritage High School, Cleveland, Tennessee; Luis Colon, 6-10, 245, Montverde Academy, Florida; Andre Stephens, 6-8, 220, Heidelberg High School, Mississippi; Willie Kemp, 6-2, 170, Bolivar Christian Academy, Tennessee; Jodie Meeks, 6-4, 200, Norcross High School, Georgia; Xavier Keeling, 6-6, 210, Butler High School, Huntsville; and Jeff Smith, 6-2, 170, Butler High School, Huntsville.

Junior Continues To Be A Winner

by Erik Stinnett

After playing at Alabama and in NFL, Junior has been helping others

EJ. Junior had the privilege of playing under the likes of Paul "Bear" Bryant, Gene Stallings and Don Shula. But it was a sentence from a disheartened child that impacted his life the most.

It was 1983. Junior and his fellow St. Louis Cardinals teammates had just defeated the Dallas Cowboys, and Junior was ecstatic. The former Alabama All-America defensive end was also on drugs.

"A little kid walked up to me after the game and said, 'I used to look up to you,'" Junior said. "That's when it really hit home that a lot of people were watching what I was doing. It made me take a good look at myself."

A year earlier, Junior found himself battling a number of trials. He went through a divorce. His fiancée was killed in a car accident. The Cardinals were losing games. Bryant, his mentor and father figure, stepped down at Alabama and then died in January 1983. Emotionally distraught, Junior turned to drugs.

"I thought drugs were going to be my life's passing," he said. "I could have destroyed my career and my life, but God gave me a second chance."

Junior, now 45, has made the most of his new lease on life. He went through drug and alcohol therapy and eventually went on to serve several years on the NFL's Drugs Advisory committee. He played with the Cardinals through 1988 when they moved to Phoenix, played three seasons with the Miami Dolphins and then one with the Seattle Seahawks. A knee injury ended his playing career in 1993.

Junior stayed on with the Seahawks in 1994 as a linebackers coach and then returned to Alabama in 1995 to complete his degree. Over the next several years, Junior found himself in jobs helping others. The Dolphins hired him in 1996 as a director of player development administrator, a role that enabled him to counsel athletes as they adjusted to their new life in the NFL. He became involved in a mentoring program sponsored by the Dade County Public School System. In 2003 he took a job as the executive director for Overtime Youth Center, a community outreach program started by NBA star Alonzo Mourning. Most recently

he worked as an associate pastor for a small ministry called the International Prayer Village.

Still, Junior wasn't fulfilled. He missed the game of football and he missed coaching. A six-week summer internship with the Minnesota Vikings in 2003 made it even more clear to the ordained minister that coaching was his calling. This year he got the break he was looking for when the Rhein Fire of NFL Europe hired him as its linebackers coach.

"I think my ministry is to help young men with their lives and help them understand that their talent is not their own," said Junior, who has a home in Plantation, Florida, but is living in Dusseldorf, Germany during the football season. "God blessed them with it. They need to utilize it to become better men. If I can teach what Coach Bryant, Coach Croom, Coach Shula, and Coach Stallings have taught me over the years and get them to be better people and work hard, they're going to always be a champion—on the field and off."

Junior's transformation from drug abuser two decades ago to life-molding mentor today doesn't surprise former Alabama teammate Jeremiah Castille. "Whatever battles he had, you knew he was going to be able to bounce back from them," Castille said. "That shows the character he has. He was a fighter on the field and off. He's had some problems, but what he learned from Coach Bryant and from being at The University of Alabama was how to overcome internal struggles like that."

As far as his future, Junior wants to eventually coach in the NFL a few years and then move to the college level. He'd welcome the chance to return to his alma mater, too.

"I really think Mike (Shula) has done a fantastic job of turning things around," he said. "Now that we're off probation, I think he'll do even greater things because now he's playing with a level playing field. I think he'll do well. And maybe he will become the next Coach Bryant. I've had a chance to meet Mike briefly. I wouldn't mind coaching under Mike, bringing some of the old school to the current staff."

Besides coaching, Junior's other passion is his family. He and his wife, Yolanda, also an Alabama graduate, have eight children. Two are from her previous marriage, three from his previous marriage, and three they've had together. Their children, seven of whom are boys, range in age from 2 to 24.

"We went to school together, but our paths went different directions after that," Junior said. "On New Year's Eve 1992, my roommate from college, Byron Braggs, had a New Year's Eve party in Oakland. Coach Stallings had invited me to the Sugar Bowl, but Byron

talked me into going to Oakland to cook gumbo and watch Bama whip Miami on television. I saw Yolanda there for the first time since my senior year of college. We got married about six months later."

Although he missed the 1993 Sugar Bowl game, Junior does have a couple of other national championship game memories to fall back on, made even more memorable by the fact that he was a vital component in those contests.

Playing during one of the most dominant eras of Alabama football, Junior and his senior class of 1980 compiled a 44-4 record, which included a combined 12-0 mark against Auburn, Tennessee, and four bowl opponents. The Tide won three SEC titles and two national championships, and, as Junior points out, it could have been three national championships had voters not vaulted number five Notre Dame over number two Alabama after the Crimson Tide routed Ohio State, 35-6, in the 1978 Sugar Bowl.

Along the way, the Crimson Tide put together a school-record 28-game winning streak, which spanned from the last nine games of 1978 through the seventh game of 1980.

"We had a group of people from different walks of life who learned how to play together, live together and cherish each other," Junior said. "I'm sure we had our ups and downs, our fusses and fights, but we knew how to play together, and we believed that we were supposed to win, and each class didn't want to let the class before it outdo it."

Over-confidence, Junior said, was never a concern. "Coach Bryant wouldn't let us get cocky," Junior—full name Ester James Junior, III—said.

Alabama during those years won the way the New England Patriots win today, Junior said. Not a long list of big-name stars. No egos. Each person selflessly fulfilling his role and trusting others to do the same.

"We had great guys on defense," he said. "We had Don McNeal, Marty Lyons, Rich Wingo, Barry Krauss, Murray Legg, Ricky Tucker, Byron Braggs, Curtis McGriff, but not everybody could be All-SEC. Not everybody could be All-America."

What everybody could do and did do was work hard. Junior remembers the grueling off-season workouts Coach Jim Goostree put the players through in the lower gym at Coleman Coliseum.

Once autumn Saturdays rolled around, Junior and his teammates could outlast any team in America.

"We were the ones who created the fourth-quarter, four-finger gesture that everybody copied," Junior said. "In the fourth quarter, we were the best conditioned team. We sub-

stituted so much during the game that we were fresh. We were made to beat you in the fourth quarter. We were going to have the discipline, the character, the drive and the gut check to fight you in the fourth quarter."

So of all four teams—the 11-1 1977 squad, the 11-1 1978 squad, the 12-0 1979 team and the 10-2 1980 squad—which one was the best? Junior, without hesitation, said the 1978 team.

"That was the most talented team," he said. "Even though we were 12-0 in 1979, the 1978 team, I think, was better. There was just a sense of pride with that team. I think if we could have played Southern Cal (the only team to beat Alabama that season) again, we would have beaten them."

Junior's favorite memory from that 1978 season and the one that perhaps best illustrates that team's mind-set was the goal line stand against Penn State in the 1979 Sugar Bowl. Alabama, clinging to a 14-7 fourth quarter lead, held Penn State on three straight running plays from the one-yard line.

Then came fourth down.

Junior said, "Marty Lyons looked at (Penn State quarterback) Chuck Fusina and said, 'I think you better pass.'"

Penn State, instead, tried another run, only to be denied one final time by the Bama defense.

If that was the high mark of his career, then the 1980 season, as a whole, was the low mark.

"I feel my senior year was a letdown," Junior said.

Top-ranked, undefeated, two-time defending national champion Alabama was well on its way to a third consecutive national crown until a visit to Jackson, Mississippi, resulted in a stunning 6-3 loss to Mississippi State. A loss to Notre Dame two weeks later dashed any hopes of a shot at a third consecutive national champion. The unexpected fate was especially troubling for the Bama defense, which yielded a combined 13 points in those two defeats, and was itching for a chance to play the undefeated Georgia Bulldogs and Herschel Walker.

"Everybody talked about Herschel Walker, and we wanted to prove that our defense could shut him down," Junior said. "But we never got the chance. I didn't think anybody could run against our defense."

Alabama brought its foul mood with it to Dallas where it manhandled Baylor, 30-2, in the Cotton Bowl.

"We were mad because we didn't get to go to the Sugar Bowl," Junior said. "That Cotton Bowl game against Baylor was almost a vengeance game. We wanted to take our frustration out on whoever we were playing because we had lost to Notre Dame 7-0 and didn't get a chance to play for the national championship. That was a bad season. When you lose two games in a season, and it's considered a bad season, that says a lot."

No one could fault Junior, however, for the Tide's slight dip in 1980. The relentless defensive end capped a remarkable career that season by earning first team All-America honors and finishing as a finalist for the Lombardi Trophy, given to the nation's top lineman. He was a second team All-America in 1979 and made All-SEC three consecutive years, 1978-80.

"He was a tremendous athlete—big, fast, strong—and he was a leader on the field," Castille said of Junior.

Junior said it was the players fighting for playing time at his position—guys like John Mauro, Mike Pitts and John Knox—that pushed him. Of course, the Alabama coaching staff did plenty of prodding as well.

"Once I got a chance to start, I didn't want to lose that opportunity," Junior said. "I didn't want to miss training table. I prided myself on wanting to be the best, so I competed against those guys, and Coach Bryant wouldn't let me be less than what I was because he saw more in me than what I saw in myself."

"I also had a great teacher in Coach (Sylvester) Croom, because Coach Croom taught me a lot about playing defensive end, which helped me on the pro level. The class and the character all came from Coach Bryant and Coach (Ken) Donahue. I don't think Coach Donahue ever said a curse word all the years I was at Alabama. He might say, 'gosh darn it,' but he never used any profanity. And then



E.J. Junior was an All-America performer on Alabama teams that went 44-4 and won two national championships. After an NFL playing career, he's back in coaching with the NFL in Europe. Univzrsity of Alabama Photo

there was just the pride of being an Alabama football player. You couldn't put on that crimson jersey or that white jersey with the crimson trim and go out there and just be average. That word didn't exist in our vocabulary."

The one thing Junior does wonder about his career is what it would have been like if he had had the same on-the-field, free-lancing opportunities similar-style players Cornelius Bennett and Derrick Thomas had.

"They had all the freedom," Junior said of Bennett and Thomas. "I think I could have had more sacks if that was what I was about, but I played where they put me. It didn't matter if I was on the left or the right, we were stationed and that's how you were supposed to play."

Gaudy stats or not, Junior will forever be remembered as one of Bama's best. Perhaps someday he'll also be remembered as one of the game's best coaches, too.

"I think he'll do real well," former Alabama halfback Major Ogilvie said of the Rhein Fire assistant. "He played for one of the best, if not the best. That will go a long way."

BAMA SCORECARD

Hey, Y'all! Watch This!

The Southeastern Conference will implement the use of instant replay on an experimental basis beginning with the 2005 football season. The league's athletics directors voted to recommend the use of instant replay in its conference football games and Presidents and Chancellors approved the proposal.

"Through every meeting and discussion with our coaches, athletics directors and Presidents and Chancellors, the use of instant replay received overwhelming support," said SEC Commissioner Mike Slive. "Our officials make every effort to get each call right. Instant replay will go a long way in helping them accomplish their goal."

Details of the use of instant replay in the SEC will be worked out by the conference's spring meetings, which will be held in Destin, Florida, May 31-June 3.

The NCAA Football Rules Committee voted earlier this year to give conferences the opportunity to use instant replay on an experimental basis for the 2005 season.

There was some skepticism regarding the announcement, primarily because instant replay will not address some of the worst transgressions for SEC officials.

A couple of years ago, Slive said, "I nearly jumped out of my chair" when he saw a missed call that favored Alabama in a game at Tennessee. That was in a game that Alabama won by 20 points and the missed call was hardly a factor in the outcome.

Both Slive and Bobby Gaston, who is supervisor of officials, cited that play as though it was the only call missed all year. Alabama officials are still trying to find anything that looks remotely like holding on a play that wiped out an Alabama touchdown in a two-point loss to Georgia two weeks earlier. That made-up call—or any of dozens and dozens like it—never gets mentioned by SEC bureaucrats.

Still, everyone is in step in support of the plan. Alabama Coach Mike Shula said, "From everything we've talked about, it's a good idea. We've talked to officials from the Big Ten. Anything we can do to make our game better, we need to do." He said one concern of a replay system is that it can sometimes take awhile to review a situation.

Another concern: an SEC official will be in charge of the replay system. Which one?

The one who couldn't see a blatant pass interference in the end zone in Alabama's game at LSU last fall? That same official, by the way, missed a holding call against LSU a few minutes later, leading directly to a game-changing touchdown by the Bengal Tigers.

Or maybe the one that watched a Tennessee player slap a Florida player, saw the Florida player retaliate, and then penalized Florida while ignoring the Tennessee infraction. Or perhaps his comrade, who incorrectly stopped the clock so Tennessee would have enough time to come from behind and beat the Gators. Slive didn't report on his chair-jumping activity following that officiating in

Knoxville. All it did was cost Florida a game and, probably, Ron Zook his job as head coach at Florida.

A group that only under the most extreme circumstances admits any mistakes by its officials seems unlikely to put any teeth into

Incidentally, early indication from the conference is that the replay system would not address mistakes such as those at Baton Rouge and Knoxville last season. Details of the use of instant replay in the SEC will be worked out by the conference's spring meetings in Destin, Florida, May 31-June 3.

Why is there any reason to believe the conference's football replay system will be any better than the haphazard system in place in basketball. In SEC basketball games if the game is being televised the officials have an opportunity to check the replay. In the SEC Women's Basketball Tournament in Greenville, South Carolina, this year, Alabama tied number one ranked LSU with a three-point field goal in the final seconds. And while both Alabama and LSU benches were preparing for overtime, the SEC officials spent time examining replays. Although no one else has seen a replay that shows anything other than a three-point shot—as originally called by the officiating crew—the huddle resulted in the officials preserving LSU's number one ranking and prematurely ending the final season of Alabama women's basketball under Rick Moody, who had announced his retirement at the end of the season.

Would LSU have beaten Alabama in overtime? Probably. But the games should be decided by the players, not a mysterious official's decision.

The SEC crew chief, Brian Enterline, consented to a post-game interview to explain the bizarre decision. He said he looked at two replays, the first "not clear," the second showing the officials had missed the call, that it was only a two-pointer. That second replay, he said, was "110 per cent" conclusive. Enterline then said, "It's a tough play, but we made a decision totally unbiased. We make sure that the decision is as professional and unbiased as possible."

Why—not once, but twice—would he say the decision was unbiased? Guilty conscience?

Drive For Five

Alabama's gymnastics team has as its goal a "Drive For Five" campaign. The object of Coach Sarah Patterson's Crimson Tide is for Bama to win its fifth national championship. The Tide didn't get championship season off to a good start, struggling to a third place finish at the SEC Championships in Duluth, Georgia. However, junior Ashley Miles won the vault, uneven bars and floor exercise.

Miles scored a 9.95 on the floor exercise and uneven bars and a 9.925 on the vault. It marked her third consecutive floor exercise title and first SEC vault and uneven bars title. She was tied for top honors on the uneven bars by freshman Terin Humphrey. Miles and Humphrey were both named All-SEC.

Senior Michelle Reeser was named the SEC Gymnastics Scholar-Athlete of the Year in a post-meet ceremony. The accounting major, a three-year Scholastic All-America, carries a 3.96 grade point average for her career.

Georgia won the title with a 197.250, followed closely by LSU's 196.975. Alabama's third place finish was its 21st top-three finish in the 25 years of the championship. Florida finished fourth with a 196.150. Arkansas was fifth at 195.325, followed by Auburn's 195.125. Kentucky rounded out the meet with a 193.800.

The Tide will not have to leave the state in its quest for the national title. Alabama will host the NCAA Central Region Championships Saturday, April 9, at 6 p.m. CST. (Tickets can be ordered at 1-877-TIDE-TIX or on-line at www.rolltide.com.) Success there and Bama will make its 23rd consecutive national championship appearance with this year's NCAA meet at Auburn April 21-23. (Tickets are available at 1-800-282-1957.)

Hall Of Fame Nominees

Former Alabama linebacker Cornelius Bennett is one of 75 players nominated this year for the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame Class will be announced in late-April and inducted at The National Football Foundation & College Hall of Fame's 48th Awards Dinner December 6, 2005, at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City. They will be officially enshrined at the Hall in South Bend, Indiana, in 2006.

Bennett was a two-time All-America (1985-86), SEC Defensive Player of the Year in 1986, and seventh in the Heisman Trophy voting that year.

National Champion

Already an Olympic finalist and World Championship Bronze Medalist, Alabama sophomore Vlad Polyakov added NCAA Champion to his resume at the NCAA Swimming and Diving Championships.

Polyakov won the 200-meter breaststroke with a school record 1:53.93, shaving more than a second off the previous mark, which he set at the SEC Championships last month. He finished a tenth of a second ahead of Northwestern's Mike Alexandrov.

Capitalizing on Polyakov's individual efforts, plus strong diving and solid relays, Alabama grabbed 14th place overall with 93 points. It marks Alabama's second top-15 finish in the past three years.

A week earlier Tide senior Anne Poleska finished her career with her fourth top-three national finish in the 200 breaststroke as she finished second. She finishes her career as a six-time SEC breaststroke champion, including four 200 titles and the SEC record in that event. She owns five individual school records as well. Internationally, Poleska earned a bronze medal in this summer's Olympic games in the 200 breaststroke.

Alabama finished 21st with 44 points in the

team race. It marked Alabama's fifth consecutive year in the top-25 and second year at 21. Alabama has posted 24 top-25 national finishes since 1976.

Women's Basketball Awards

As might be expected, the focus of this year's Alabama women's basketball awards ceremony was retiring Coach Rick Moody. Moody, who completed 16 years of service, paid tribute to his players and staff for their hard work on and off the court. Each player on his final team received a commemorative plaque.

Several players were also honored with annual team awards that are voted on by the players. Seniors Monique Bivins, Natasha Gamble and Katie Sipe were elected permanent team captains for this season. Freshman point guard Lateefah Joye was named the "Most Improved Player" while sophomore Marverly Nettles garnered the "Shelly Pyles Hustle Award." Sipe won the "Dottie Kelso Inspiration Award."

Now, If He Could Just Pitch

Alabama baseball this year was being built around sophomore left-handed pitcher Wade LeBlanc, last year's national freshman of the year. But an unfunny thing happened on the way to SEC competition. Alabama baseball has fallen on such hard times that the Crimson Tide actually had a victory pile-up following a win over Miami of Ohio. And in the pile-up LeBlanc injured his shoulder, missing at least the first two SEC series.

Prior to the injury, LeBlanc showed he was ready to pick up this year where he left off last year. He was named Louisville Slugger National Player of the Week by *Collegiate Baseball* newspaper as well as SEC Player of the Week following his 17-strikeout performance against McNeese State on March 4. LeBlanc worked 7 2/3 scoreless innings in the 4-0 win and held the Cowboys to just one hit en route to his second win of the 2005 season. The 17 strikeouts fell one short of the Alabama single-game record of 18 held by Mike Innes against Stillman College on March 25, 1971.

At one point in the game, LeBlanc struck out 11 of 14 McNeese State hitters from the third through the seventh inning. He struck out three batters in the fifth and sixth innings as he posted a career-high for strikeouts. In an earlier game he struck out 13 vs. Duquesne.

He was examined by Bama Team Physician James Andrews and was expected to be ready to pitch by the LSU series beginning April 1.

Even without LeBlanc, Alabama won its first home SEC series in nearly two years when the Tide swept Kentucky on league-opening weekend. Bama had lost six consecutive SEC series before sweeping the Wildcats.

Thus, Alabama opened the season 3-0 in SEC play for the first time since the 2003 season.

There's No Place Like Home

All five Alabama golfers finished among the Top 25 in helping the Crimson Tide hold off a final round charge by Georgia State to capture the team's second consecutive Conrad Rehling Spring Invitational at Ol' Colony Golf Complex. Alabama carded a final round 291 en route to a tournament total of 881, three shots in front of runner-up Georgia State (884). The Panthers, coached by former UA golfer and Assistant Coach Matt Clark, fash-

ioned the low round of the tournament on Sunday shooting a six-under-par 282 to move up from fourth to second.

Tide senior Clint Provost led the way for Bama firing a final round three-under-par 69. Provost finished in 11th place at 224. Junior Thomas Hagler (76) and Joseph Sykora (73) were Alabama's low finishers in the event tying for third-place with scores of 220. Freshman Gator Todd also posted a Top 10 showing finishing tied for ninth at 223 including a final round 78. Freshman Mark Harrell tied for 22nd at 228 (73).

The tournament title marked the fourth time the Crimson Tide has won its own spring event and second year in a row.

The Tide of Coach Jay Seawell checked into the Top 25 for the first time this season. Alabama is ranked 25th in the Golf Coaches Association of America/Bridgestone Coaches Poll. The poll is voted on by a panel of head coaches at Division I institutions.

McWhorter Nominees

Diver Stewart Smith and soccer player Katie French have been nominated by The University of Alabama for the H. Boyd McWhorter Scholar-Athlete Post-Graduate Scholarship. The scholarship has been presented by the SEC since 1986 to the league's top male and female scholar-athletes. Recipients will be announced on April 6 in conjunction with National Student-Athlete Day.

Smith, a senior from Chattanooga, has earned a 3.54 grade point average, majoring in Management. He is a three-time member of the SEC Academic Honor Roll (2004-05 Winter Honor Roll announced April) and a two-time member of the Dean's List. Smith is also a member of the Golden Key International Honor Society, the Alpha Kappa Psi professional business fraternity and the Gamma Beta Phi Honor Society.

Smith is a three-time NCAA scorer and a former All-America.

French, a senior from Copperas Cove, Texas, has earned a 3.91 grade point average, with a dual major in Spanish and Public Relations. She has been a member of the Dean's List for seven semesters, a two-time member of the SEC Academic Honor Roll and a three-time member of the ESPN The Magazine Academic All-District Team as voted by the College Sports Information Directors of America. French is also a member of Kappa Tau Alpha, the National Honor Society in Journalism and Mass Communication, the Golden Key International Honor Society and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars.

French will leave The Capstone as the school's all-time assist leader with 16. She also ranks third all-time in points and goals.

Alabama soccer player Lauren Imwalle was last year's women's winner.

Good Start

In a tight battle that came down to the final relay on both the men and women's side of the meet, Alabama's men claimed their seventh consecutive Alabama Relays title while the Crimson Tide women came up just short, taking second. Alabama's men won with 72 points, with Mississippi State in second at 70 points. On the women's side, the UAB scored

55 points, while the Tide women posted 53.

In Hall Of Fame

Among 11 new members of Alabama High School Athletics Hall of Fame is Bubba Lewis, former Alabama baseball player (1963-65). Lewis coached for 25 years in baseball, basketball and football, but was best known for his baseball success. As baseball coach at Sidney Lanier for 12 years and Jeff Davis for 11, he guided his teams to a 416-165 record and a state championship at Jeff Davis in 1987 when he was named state coach of the year. Including his single seasons at Holtville (his hometown) and T.R. Miller high schools, his career record was 441-176. In football he was defensive coordinator at Jeff Davis, which won a state title in 1987, and was on the staffs of two Lanier state championship teams.

Moving On Up

The third week of March was very good for Alabama's women's and men's tennis teams. For the women, Ashley Bentley was the SEC Athlete of the Week as she led the Crimson Tide to an upset of number 11 Harvard. And the Bama squad of Coach Jenny Mainz jumped seven spots in national rankings to number 23. Bentley's victory against Harvard assured her of her second 20-win season. She is ranked 58th.

For the men's team of Coach Billy Pate, for the second time this season Luigi D'Agord was SEC Athlete of the Week. That followed him leading Bama to a 6-1 upset of North Carolina.

D'Agord knocked off higher ranked opponents in each of his two wins. First in doubles, D'Agord and partner Eric Molnar defeated the 14th ranked doubles team of Geoff Boyd and Brad Pomeroy, 8-5. Then in singles D'Agord defeated number 63 Raian Luchici, 5-7, 6-3, 6-2.

Good Worker

The Southeastern Conference sponsors a Good Works Teams for 20 sports it sponsors. The Gymnastics Good Works Team includes Alabama's Dana Pierce. The Good Works Team highlights an athlete from each school who gives back to the community.

Pierce has read to area school children several times over the years, including on "Read Across America Day" in early March. Pierce has also helped raise money for the Salvation Army's Project Angel Tree. She has visited patients at the VA Hospital in Tuscaloosa as well as working with children at the Children's Hands On Museum. Pierce has also spoken to children at local schools on the importance of making positive choices. She is a Scholastic All-America and Academic All-SEC, as well as recipient of Council of Presidents' Freshman Academic Achievement Award. She was also inducted into Phi Eta Sigma honor society.

Strength Clinic

Alabama Strength and Conditioning Coach Kent Johnston and his staff will host a strength and conditioning clinic for coaches and athletes April 23-24. The clinic will include seminars and lectures as well as interactive coaching and evaluation and assessment.

Clinic guests include Al Vermeil (NFL, NBA, MLB), Louie Simmons, and Martin Rooney.

The camp is limited to 300 athletes who must pre-register. For information call (205) 348-3600.

2004-05 Alabama Winter Sports Results

Men's Basketball

Date	Opponent	CST
UofA	Opp.	
104	Stillman (Exh)	50
89	Athletes in Action (Exh)	63
97	Western Carolina	66
85	North Texas	70
Great Alaska Shootout @ Anchorage		
90	Alaska-Anchorage	55
78	Minnesota	72
76	Washington	79
114	East Tennessee State	77
102	@ NC-Charlotte (3 OT)	101
72	@ Alabama State	54
75	Temple	71
87	Tennessee State	79
76	Texas A&M-Corpus Christi	54
62	@ Wisconsin (ESPN2)	76
68	New Orleans	57
66	@ Vanderbilt	70
73	LSU	58
64	@ Arkansas (ESPN)	61
98	Mississippi State (ESPN)	49
66	@ Mississippi (J-P)	58
60	@ Auburn	55
75	Georgia	47
54	@ Florida (J-P)	85
72	@ Tennessee (J-P)	54
71	Mississippi	45
72	Arkansas (J-P)	63
87	South Carolina (J-P)	68
59	@ LSU (ESPN)	61
71	Kentucky (CBS)	78
94	Auburn	53
68	@ Mississippi State (CBS)	63
SEC Tournament @ Atlanta		
69	Mississippi	52
62	Florida	68
NCAA Tournament @ Cleveland		
73	Wisconsin-Milwaukee	83

Women's Basketball

Date	Opponent	CST
UofA	Opp.	
93	EA Sports (Exh)	75
81	Michigan	79 (OT)
80	Middle Tennessee State	66
@ Seattle Times Classic		
81	Columbia	45
76	Washington	56
59	@ Virginia Tech	72
74	Alabama-Birmingham	55
62	@ Tennessee Tech	59
52	Kansas St @ Springfield, Mo.	71
71	Alabama A&M	62
Christmas Classic @ Bethlehem, Pa.		
59	Delaware	67
78	Yale	60
60	Florida International	54
83	South Dakota State	86
69	Kentucky	63
77	@ Mississippi State	84
51	@ LSU	76
75	South Carolina (Fox)	62
59	@ Auburn	43
72	Mississippi State	61
63	Georgia	72
77	Florida	66
68	@ Arkansas	83
54	@ Mississippi	68
63	Auburn	74
57	@ South Carolina	66
53	@ Vanderbilt	64
81	Tennessee	94
SEC Tournament @ Greenville, S.C.		
62	Florida	58
59	LSU	60

Gymnastics

Date	Opponent	CST
Super Six Challenge @ Gainesville, Fla.		
1. Georgia 194.850, 2. Florida 194.45, 3. Alabama 193.875, 4. Arizona 193.425, 5. Penn State 193.0, 6. Iowa 190.725		
195.975	Iowa State	193.750
197.175	LSU	197.050
196.350	@ Florida	196.550
196.900	Auburn	194.350
195.250	Kentucky	193.825
197.025	@ Georgia	196.175
194.800	@ Arkansas	193.750
197.100	@ Stanford	194.975
196.325	North Carolina	194.550
March 26	SEC Championships	
	@ Gwinnett, Ga.	Third
April 9	NCAA Regionals	
April 21-	NCAA Championships	
April 23	@ Auburn	

Women's Indoor Track

Date	Event
Dec. 3-4	Clemson Opener @ Clemson, S.C.
Jan. 14-15	Kentucky Invitational @ Lexington, Ky.
Jan. 21-22	Clemson Invitational @ Clemson, S.C.
Feb. 4-5	Nebraska Invitational @ Lincoln, Neb.
Feb. 11-12	Tyson Invitational @ Fayetteville, Ark.
Feb. 18	Purple Tiger @ Baton Rouge, La.
Feb. 25-27	SEC Championships 8th @ Fayetteville, Ark.
Mar. 3-5	Notre Dame Last Chance @ South Bend, Ind.
Mar. 11-12	NCAA Championships 39th @ Fayetteville, Ark.

Men's Indoor Track

Date	Event
Jan. 15	Kentucky Invitational @ Lexington, Ky.
Jan. 22	East Tennessee Invitational @ Johnson City, Tenn.
Jan. 28-29	Clemson Invitational @ Clemson, S.C.
Feb. 4-5	Meyo Invitational @ South Bend, Ind.
Feb. 11-12	Tyson Invitational @ Fayetteville, Ark.
Feb. 25-27	SEC Championships @ Fayetteville, Ark. 9th
Mar. 3-5	Notre Dame Last Chance @ South Bend, Ind.
Mar. 5	Florida Last Chance @ Gainesville, Fla.
Mar. 11-12	NCAA Championships @ Fayetteville, Ark. DNS

Men's Swimming

Date	Opponent	CST
171	@ LSU	111
104	@ Delta State	36
99	Louisiana-Monroe @ Cleveland, Miss.	51
97	@ Kentucky	137
99	Auburn	153
Dec. 2-4	Auburn Invitational	
Dec. 1-4	U.S. Open @ San Antonio	
101	@ Georgia	130
105	Florida	132
149	South Carolina	94
Feb. 11-13	SEC Diving Championships @ Gainesville, Fla.	
Feb. 16-19	SEC Swim Championships @ Gainesville, Fla. 5th	
Mar. 5	Last Chance @ Athens	All Day
Mar. 11-13	NCAA Zone Diving @ Atlanta, Ga.	All Day
Mar. 24-	NCAA Championships	All Day
Mar. 26	@ Minneapolis, Minn.	14th

Women's Swimming

Date	Opponent	CST
80	@ LSU	53
74	Arkansas @ Baton Rouge	59
118	@ Delta State	22
114	Louisiana-Monroe @ Cleveland, Miss.	19
109	@ Kentucky	132
105	Auburn	140
Dec. 2-4	Auburn Invitational	
Dec. 1-4	U.S. Open @ San Antonio	
94	@ Georgia	131
106	Florida	131
117	South Carolina	126
Feb. 11-13	SEC Diving Championships @ Gainesville, Fla.	
Feb. 16-19	SEC Swim Championships @ Gainesville, Fla. 6th	
Feb. 26	Last Chance @ Auburn	All Day
Mar. 11-13	NCAA Zone Diving @ Atlanta, Ga.	All Day
Mar. 17-	NCAA Championships	All Day
Mar. 19	@ Lafayette, Ind.	21st

2005 Alabama Spring Sports Schedules

Baseball

Date	Opponent	CT
1	@ Hawaii	4
9-2	@ Hawaii (2)	5-3
3	@ Hawaii	2
7	NC-Asheville	2
6-10	NC-Asheville (2)	0-4
1	@ Alabama-B'ham	7
13	Duquesne	3
6	Duquesne	1
4	Duquesne	1
8	Samford	4
4	McNeese State	0
3	McNeese State	2
23	McNeese State	1
8	B'ham-Southern	3
4	Miami (Ohio)	5
8	Miami (Ohio)	7
10	Miami (Ohio)	11
6	Butler	2
5	Kentucky	3
5	Kentucky	3
10	Kentucky	4
5	Jacksonville St	3
0	@ Vanderbilt	1
3	@ Vanderbilt (13 inn.)	4
10	@ Vanderbilt	8
Mar 29	@ Southern Miss	6:30
April 1	LSU	6:30
April 2	LSU	4:00
April 3	LSU	2:00
April 6	SE Louisiana	6:30
April 8	@ Mississippi	6:30
April 9	@ Mississippi	4:00
April 10	@ Mississippi	1:30
April 12	Memphis	6:30
April 15	@ Florida	5:30
April 16	@ Florida (Fox)	3:00
April 17	@ Florida	11:00
April 20	Miss Valley State	6:30
April 22	South Carolina	6:30
April 23	So Carolina (Fox)	3:00
April 24	South Carolina	2:00
April 27	South Alabama	6:30
April 29	Georgia	6:30
April 30	Georgia	4:00
May 1	Georgia	2:00
May 4	Alabama-B'ham	6:30
May 6	@ Miss State	6:00
May 7	@ Miss State	2:00
May 8	@ Miss State	1:30
May 13	Arkansas	6:30
May 14	Arkansas	4:00
May 15	Arkansas	11:00
May 20	@ Auburn	7:00
May 21	@ Auburn	4:00
May 22	@ Auburn	1:00
May 25-	SEC Tournament	
May 29	(Hoover, Alabama)	TBA
June 3-	NCAA Regional	
June 6	(Campus Sites)	TBA
June 10-	NCAA Super Regional	
June 13	(Campus Sites)	TBA
June 17-	College World Series	
June 27	Omaha, Nebraska	TBA

Softball

Date	Opponent	CT
	Bama Bash	
8	Alabama-B'ham	0
4	Evansville	0
8	Georgia Southern	4
6	Georgia Southern	0
2	Alabama-B'ham	1
2-7	Northwestern St (2)	1-2
	Houston Invitational	
2	Oklahoma	0
7	Houston	4
5	Sam Houston St	2
5	Houston	2
Feb 13	Sam Houston St	rainout
	Crimson Classic	
7	Maryland	0
11	Penn State	2
1	Missouri	6
3	Penn State	2
5	Maryland	0
5	@ Troy	1
	Leadoff Classic @ Columbus, Ga.	
3	Oregon	0
2	Florida Atlantic	1
4	Creighton	6
1	North Carolina	0
	Hawaii Wahine Classic	
9	Delaware State	0
2	Portland State	1
10	Mount St. Mary's	1
2	California	3
3	Hawaii	1
4	Hawaii	3
0	California	7
1-1	@ Tennessee (2)	3-7
8	@ Tennessee	1
9-9	MTSU (2)	1-2
16	Samford	4
10-6	Kentucky (2)	2-2
5	Kentucky	1
2	Auburn	4
6-4	Auburn (2)	4-3
6	@ LSU	0
13-7	@ LSU (2)	0-1
Mar 29	@ Florida (2)	5:00
Mar 30	@ Florida	2:00
April 2	Mississippi (2)	5:00
April 3	Mississippi	1:30
April 5	Belmont	
	@ Huntsville	6:30
April 9	Mississippi St (2)	1:00
April 10	Mississippi State	1:30
April 13	B'ham-Southern	7:00
April 16	@ So Carolina (2)	1:00
April 17	@ South Carolina	1:00
April 26	@ B'ham-Southern	7:00
April 30	@ Georgia (2)	1:00
May 1	@ Georgia	1:00
May 6	Arkansas	6:30
May 7	Arkansas (2)	1:00
May 8	@ Lipscomb	2:00
May 12-	SEC Tournament	TBA
May 15	@ Gainesville	
May 20-	NCAA Regional	TBA
May 22	(Campus Sites)	
May 27-	Super Regionals	TBA
May 28	(Campus Sites)	
June 2-	College World Series	TBA
June 8	@ Oklahoma City, Okla.	

Men's Tennis

Date/UA	Opponent	Time/Opp
6	B'ham-Southern	1
6	Central Florida	1
5	Furman	2
5	Troy	2
2	@ Rice	5
1	@ Virginia	6
5	@ William & Mary	2
1	@ Michigan	6
3	Ohio State	4
1	Georgia	6
1	@ Tennessee	6
2	Mississippi	5
2	Mississippi State	5
6	North Carolina	1
4	Southern Miss	3
1	South Carolina	6
1	Florida	6
April 1	@ Vanderbilt	5:00
April 3	@ Kentucky	Noon
April 8	@ Arkansas	1:30
April 10	@ LSU	1:00
April 13	Samford	1:00
April 13	Alabama-B'ham	6:00
Apr 16	@ Auburn	5:00
Apr 21-	SEC Championships	
Apr 24	@ Athens	
May 13-	NCAA Regional	
May 15	@ TBA	
May 20-	NCAA Championships	
June 2	@ College Station, Texas	

Women's Tennis

Date/UA	Opponent	Time/Opp
6	Denver	1
2	@ Michigan	5
4	@ West Michigan	3
2	@ Florida State	5
3	@ Georgia Tech	4
4	Rice	3
2	Miami	5
6	Murray State	1
2	@ Georgia	5
4	Tennessee	3
2	@ Mississippi	5
1	@ Mississippi State	6
4	Harvard	2
3	@ South Carolina	4
0	@ Florida	7
April 1	Vanderbilt	4:00
April 3	Kentucky	Noon
April 8	Arkansas	4:00
April 10	LSU	1:00
April 13	South Alabama	3:00
April 16	Auburn	4:00
April 21-	SEC Championships	
April 24	@ Tuscaloosa	
May 13-	NCAA Regional	
May 15	@ TBA	
May 19-	NCAA Championships	
May 28	@ Athens, Ga.	

Men's Outdoor Track

Date	Event	Finish
Mar 17-	Alabama Relays	
Mar 20	@ Tuscaloosa	1st
Mar 25-	@ Stanford Open	
Mar 26		
April 9	@ Clemson Invitational	
April 16	Sun Angel @ Tempe	
April 23	@ Mississippi Open	
April 28-	Drake Relays	
April 30	@ Des Moines	
May 7	Jesse Owens Classic	
	@ Columbus, Ohio	
May 12-	SEC Championships	
May 15	@ Nashville	
May 27-	NCAA Regional	
May 28	@ Bloomington, Ind.	
June 8-	NCAA Championships	
June 11	@ Sacramento, Calif.	

Women's Golf

Date	Event	Finish
Feb 20-	Miami Invitational	
Feb 22	@ Don Shula Resort	11th
Mar 12-	Lady Gamecock	
Mar 14	@ Blythewood, SC	20th
Mar 18-	LSU Invitational	
Mar 20	@ Baton Rouge	14th
Mar 25-	Liz Murphey Classic	
Mar 27	@ Athens, Ga.	
Apr 15-	SEC Championships	
Apr 17	@ Tunica, Miss.	
May 5-	NCAA Regional	
May 7	@ Gainesville, Fla.	
May 18-	NCAA Championships	
May 21	@ Corvallis, Oregon	

Women's Outdoor Track

Date	Event	Finish
Mar 17-	Alabama Relays	
Mar 20	@ Tuscaloosa	2nd
April 9	@ Mississippi Invitational	
April 13-	Sea Ray Relays	
April 14	@ Knoxville	
April 23	@ LSU Alumni Gold	
April 28-	Drake Relays	
April 30	@ Des Moines	
May 12-	SEC Championships	
May 15	@ Nashville	
May 27-	NCAA Regional	
May 28	@ Bloomington, Ind.	
June 8-	NCAA Championships	
June 11	@ Sacramento, Calif.	

Men's Golf

Date	Event	Finish
Feb 20-	Mercedes Benz	
Feb 21	@ Jacksonville, Fla.	2 of 17
Feb 27-	Puerto Rico Classic	
Mar 1	@ San Juan	12 of 18
Mar 11-	Conrad Rehling Invite	
Mar 13	@ Ol' Colony Club	1 of 13
Mar 27-	Hootie at Bulls Bay	
Mar 29	@ Charleston, S.C.	
Apr 2-	Augusta State Invite	
Apr 3	@ Augusta, Ga.	
Apr 15	SEC Championships	
Apr 17	@ Sea Island, Ga.	
May 19-	NCAA Regional	
May 21	@ Sea Island, Ga.	
May 31-	NCAA Championships	
June 3	@ Owings Mill, Md.	

Despite Finish, It Was A Good Year

by Kirk McNair

Although Coach Mark Gottfried's Alabama basketball team had a very good year, in the long run it will be remembered for under-achieving in the NCAA Tournament. And in the short run it will be remembered because it was Kennedy Winston's final season.

Winston, who led the Southeastern Conference in scoring and was first team All-SEC and received All-America mention, decided to declare for the 2005 NBA draft. His decision was not a shocking surprise. In making the announcement, Winston said, "Playing in the NBA has been my dream, and I feel like this is the best time for me to go ahead and pursue that dream and try to make that jump. Playing basketball at Alabama has been a special experience, and there are people and memories I will take with me and look back on fondly. I'm proud of what we've accomplished and will continue to be proud of this program and Alabama for the rest of my life."

Winston, who is in good academic standing and on track to graduate next year, will withdraw from his spring semester classes.

Winston, 6-6, 230, from Prichard, was a first team All-SEC selection by both the Associated Press and the SEC Coaches and honorable mention AP All-America. He was third team All-America by Scout.com. He holds Alabama's school record with his six SEC Player of the Week awards, including three this past season. He averaged 17.9 points and 5.4 rebounds a game in 2005 and ranks 20th all-time in career scoring at Alabama with 1,325 points for a career scoring average of 16.2 points a game in his three seasons.

"Ken and I have discussed this a number of times, and he feels this is something he wants to do at this time," said Gottfried. "Kennedy has been a great asset in our program and a young man who we have enjoyed and been proud to have here at Alabama. We will support him 100 percent as he pursues his career."

Although Winston said he has no plans to retain an agent, he made it clear that his decision is final. June 21 is the early entrant withdrawal deadline; June 28 is the draft.

Blame Nolan Richardson for Alabama's first round flame-out in the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament. After



Coach Mark Gottfried

all, since Richardson was booted from his position as Head Hog of Arkansas basketball, the SEC has turned into a half-court league. And when a team has played half-court all year and runs up against an athletic, full-court team, the result can be disaster.

Such was the case when Bama drew Wisconsin-Milwaukee in the first round of the NCAA Tournament. It was no surprise that basketball experts from coast-to-coast fingered the Alabama-Milwaukee game for an upset. (But how much of an "upset" is it when half the columnists in America predict it?) For the record Milwaukee was an 83-73 winner.

That is not to say Alabama's performance should be excused. It was embarrassing. But embarrassing and surprising are not necessarily the same. Milwaukee was not a good draw for Alabama, a team that has difficulty defending the three-point shot and also lives (or dies) offensively by its outside shooting.

Try as he might (and he did try), Earnest Shelton is just not athletic enough for a game in which the opponents set screens to free up the man Shelton is guarding. Nor can Shelton get open for his shot against a defender who actively works.

Winston told the Tuscaloosa News that some people believe he doesn't go full speed on defense, but Winston thinks he does. As good as Winston can be offensively, he is a very poor defensive player, and it showed in most Bama losses (as well as some wins) during the year. Winston has the ability to be a good defender.

Both Winston and Shelton needed to score

a lot to off-set what they gave up on the defensive end. Nevertheless, both will be missed in 2005-06.

The Tide will return point guard Ron Steele, high post Jermareo Davidson (who had something of a sophomore slump), and power forward Chuck Davis. The only subs who saw appreciable playing time in crucial games are wing Jean Felix and post player Evan Brock.

Gottfried said, "We've got some key guys who are going to be back. And they have got to get better. As a staff we have to get better. We have to get deeper and stronger."

Because of Alabama's extraordinary run to the Elite Eight at the end of the 2004 basketball season, expectations were unrealistically high for this year's team. Gottfried tried to remind that the Tide had just missed being put out in the first round of last year's NCAA Tournament by Southern Illinois, and that the Tide had been only a .500 team in 2004 SEC play.

But Alabama took advantage of a weak SEC to put up a 24-8 mark and finish 12-4 in SEC play, tying for first place in the SEC Western Division. Individual honors for Bama players were in excess of any team success beyond that division co-championship. In most games against decent competition, the Tide was found wanting. The best two wins were an overtime thriller at North Carolina-Charlotte (another first round NCAA victim) and at Mississippi State to end regular season play.

Games against ranked teams such as Washington, Wisconsin, Florida and Kentucky were losses.

But there were nice honors for the players. For only the third time in SEC history (and the first time for Alabama), all five Bama starters earned All-SEC honors from the AP. Winston was first team, Shelton second team, and Chuck Davis, Ron Steele and Jermareo Davidson all third team.

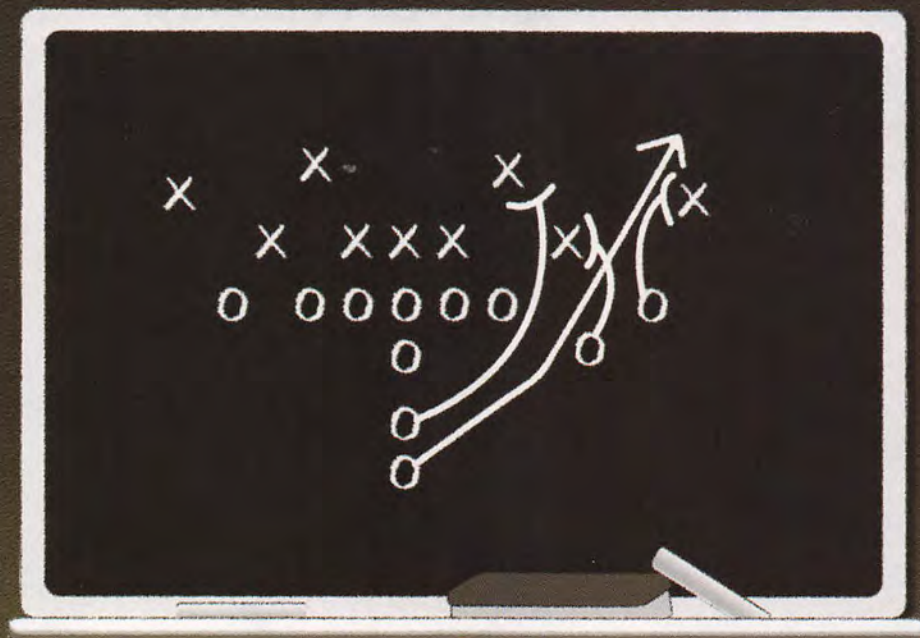
It is the first time all five starters at one league school have been voted to the AP All-SEC team since 1966 and only the third time ever. In 1949 and in 1966 Kentucky had five players named AP All-SEC.

On the SEC Coaches all-star team, Winston was unanimous first team and was joined on the first unit by Shelton. Steele was unanimous All-SEC Freshman Team. Davis was second team and Steele third team.

Both Winston and Shelton was selected to the All-District Team by the United States Basketball Writers Association. (District 4 includes players from the states of Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Florida.)

Winston is a finalist for the Wooden Award, which will be announced April 9.

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